

## Baker named W. Sahara envoy

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — Former U.S. Secretary of State James Baker was named Monday as special U.N. envoy to Western Sahara in a move aimed at boosting stalled efforts to determine the political future of the disputed former Spanish territory. His appointment as personal envoy of U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan is likely to bring international attention as well as Mr. Baker's skill in diplomatic negotiations to the decades-old African dispute. In a statement, Mr. Baker said Mr. Annan had asked for a "fresh assessment" of the conflict and added, "I am pleased to do what I can to help resolve this issue and will explore with the parties all viable options." He said his efforts would review the current U.N. proposal "but also any new initiative that might bridge the current impasse." He said he would travel to the region next month for his first talks.

# Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation  
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Volume 22 Number 6481

AMMAN TUESDAY, MARCH 18, 1997, DHU'L QADAH 9, 1417

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

## Israelis, Palestinians prepare for showdown over Jerusalem

*Despite mounting tension, Shaath and Mordechai work out use of Gaza airport*

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Ready for a showdown, Palestinians pitched tents and Israeli snipers and troops in riot gear set up positions Monday on land in Arab East Jerusalem slated for the construction of a Jewish settlement.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said his government would not reverse its decision to start construction of the 6,500-apartment settlement this week. "If we do not stand up to threats over Jerusalem, we will not stand up to threats over anything," Mr. Netanyahu told his ruling coalition.

He also warned that Israel was prepared to deal with possible Palestinian violence. "We are preparing for all possibilities," he said. A senior Palestinian official said violence was imminent, and Palestinian hospitals discharged some patients to be ready to treat large numbers of wounded in case of possible riots.

In the West Bank, dozens of Palestinians protesting against Jewish settlement construction stoned Israeli troops.

In a sign of ongoing crisis, the two sides also missed Monday's deadline to begin talks on a permanent peace accord that would define borders and address the future of Jerusalem, Jewish settlements and Palestinian refugees.

However, prodded by the United States and Jordan, Israel and the Palestinians sought to avert violence by trying to arrange a meeting this week between Mr. Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

The United States reportedly has pressed Israel to make a number of good-will gestures to compensate the Palestinians.

In one gesture, Israel agreed Monday to grant landing rights to Arafat's aircraft at the Dahaniya airfield in the Gaza Strip even though overall security arrangements for cargo and passenger traffic have still not been finalised.

The agreement was reached in a meeting between Israeli Defence

## Knesset rejects confidence motion against Netanyahu

THE ISRAELI parliament Monday rejected a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over his policies towards the Palestinians and Jordan.

Fifty-four government-coalition deputies voted against the motion submitted by opposition Labour Party Deputy Ephraim Sneh.

Forty-six left-wing deputies voted for the motion.

Twenty members in the 120-seat Knesset were absent. "With his policy, the head of government has triggered Israel's isolation on the international scene and annoyed" King Hussein, Mr. Sneh said as he presented the motion.

Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and Palestinian Planning Minister Nabil Shaath. It was the first high-level meeting in a week since Palestinians suspended contacts last week over Israel's decision to go ahead with the Jerusalem settlement project.

"Our presence here means that we have not abandoned the peace process and we are trying to stop the project of Jabal Abu Ghneim through political means," Mr. Shaath told reporters.

The Palestinians fear the Jewish settlement, known to Israelis as Har Homa, will make it increasingly difficult for them to set up a capital in Arab East Jerusalem.

A survey published Monday in the Yediot Ahronot daily indicated that Israelis were evenly divided over the project, with 49 per cent saying the government should delay construction and 47 per cent saying it should start immediately. The poll had a margin of error of four percentage points.

At the site slated for construction, Israelis and Palestinians moved into position Monday.

Faisal Hussein, the senior Palestinian official in Jerusalem, pitched two tents he said would serve as his office for now.

Dozens of Israeli soldiers, some in riot gear and others armed with sniper rifles, took position behind boulders a few metres away. The West Bank army commander and other senior officers visited the site, studying maps.

Mr. Hussein said he and a

dozen other people would spend the night in the tents decorated with Palestinian flags. "The moment the Israeli bulldozers go to work, we will confront them, using peaceful means," Mr. Hussein told reporters.

Mr. Hussein added that the atmosphere was similar to the days leading up to the 1987-1993 Palestinian uprising. "I can smell the same scents we smelled before the uprising," Mr. Hussein said.

There were no signs Monday that construction was starting. The project's foreman, Sasson Shem-Tov, said he was still waiting for a permit from the housing ministry.

Palestinian hospitals in Jerusalem and the West Bank prepared to treat a large number of wounded from possible violence.

At Mukassed hospital, some patients were being discharged early, and medication was being stockpiled, director Darwish Nazal said. Doctors who live in the West Bank were asked to stay at the hospital overnight. In the event of clashes, Israel often clamps a tight closure on the West Bank, making it impossible for most Palestinians to reach Jerusalem.

No new date has been set, meanwhile, for beginning talks on a permanent peace agreement.

The Palestinians and Israel's previous government held an opening round of final status talks in May 1996, just three weeks before Netanyahu came to power. Negotiations have

been suspended since then, despite a nearing May 1999 deadline.

Israeli cabinet Secretary Danny Naveh and chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat were to meet later Monday to arrange a Netanyahu-Arafat summit, said Arafat aide Marwan Kanafani.

The two leaders will focus on the final status talks in the summit, but will also try to defuse the tensions between them, Mr. Kanafani said.

"There is no doubt that this can help the atmosphere and I hope the process of negotiations between us, and the Palestinians will continue," Mr. Mordechai said.

Mr. Shaath said Mr. Arafat could use the airfield at the southern tip of the Gaza Strip to fly in his Fokker 50 presidential jet or helicopters from Tuesday.

"This is a small arrangement, but an important one for the Palestinian people and the Palestinian economy," Mr. Shaath said.

"I hope it will open up very soon the conclusion of agreements on opening the Gaza airport for all passengers and cargo," he said. Neither Mr. Mordechai nor Mr. Shaath said what security restrictions had been accepted by the Palestinians on Arafat's use of the airfield.

But other officials said Israel retained the right to search Arafat's plane before take-off accompanied by Palestinian police. Israeli security will also have the authority to search passengers other than Mr. Arafat, members of his immediate family and some close associates, they said.

Mr. Netanyahu announced his decision on the Gaza airport Sunday night after talks with King Hussein.

He also decided to speed up negotiations on opening the airfield to the general public, on authorising the harbour construction and on setting up "free passage" corridors from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip.

## Crown Prince briefs Arafat on King's talks with Netanyahu, reaffirms Jordan's rejection of Israeli measures in Arab East Jerusalem

Combined agency dispatches

HIS ROYAL Highness Crown Prince Hassan met Palestinian President Yasser Arafat Monday in an effort to help resolve the crisis in Israeli-Palestinian relations.

Prince Hassan delivered a message to Mr. Arafat from His Majesty King Hussein and briefed him on talks Sunday in West Jerusalem between the King and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu which led to a resumption of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

Prince Hassan, who was accompanied by Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti, Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh and head of the General Intelligence Department Samih Barukhi, reiterated Jordan's strong support for the Palestinian people's inalienable rights.

Prince Hassan stressed the need for continuing peace-building through dialogue and negotiation.

Prince Hassan, who returned home after the visit, underlined the need for maintaining Jordanian-Palestinian coordination in the peace process and the importance of interaction with other countries in order to secure more world support and backing for the Palestinians' legitimate rights.

"We cannot accept any change or distortion of the situation on the ground in Jerusalem and we don't accept building of settlements," said Prince Hassan, who stressed that peace-



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in Gaza on Monday (photo by Boghos)

building can only come through dialogue.

"I hope dialogue will resume among the responsible leaders of this region to tackle the region's vital issues, especially the forced migration of Arab people from Jerusalem and the Jewish settlements," he said.

"The people of Jordan share the Palestinian people's sufferings and appreciate your patience and your ability to control the situation," he said.

"We spoke about how to protect the peace process from what has happened with Israel's decision to build a new Jewish settlement in Jerusalem and to 'Judaize' Jerusalem," Mr. Arafat said at a press conference following the talks.

Mr. Arafat branded Israel's refusal to cancel plans to begin work this week on Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem "a complete violation of the peace process and signed agreements."

Prince Hassan also criticised the Israeli plan, saying, "the building of settlements does not help the peace process or help the two nations (Israelis and Palestinians) to live together."

But he said Jordan's mediation initiative was aimed at "avoiding a return to the way of violence."

"I hope President Arafat, and other Arab leaders and Israel, will understand this and move peacefully," he said.

"I think that the next few

days will see more intensive contacts, but there is much work still to do," he said.

King Hussein visited Israel on Sunday to pay condolence calls on the families of seven Israeli schoolgirls slain last week by a rogue Jordanian soldier at a tourist spot along the two countries' border.

The Monarch also held lengthy talks with Mr. Netanyahu aimed at trying to ease recent tensions in Israeli-Jordanian relations and bring Israelis and Palestinians back to the negotiating table to avoid a threatened outburst of violence over Israel's Arab East Jerusalem settlement plan.

(Continued on page 7)

## King thanks RJ staff for aid to orphans

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Monday sent a cable to the Royal Jordanian staff for their donation of clothes, blankets and kitchen equipment to orphans after the King called two weeks ago on all Jordanians to help the orphans in the country. In his cable, the King voiced appreciation of the RJ staff for their "kind gesture on the part of one of the leading Jordanian institutions" and described it as reflecting the "real manners of the Jordanian citizens."

It's the Final Count Down  
for the  
Grand Opening  
of  
YESTERDAYS  
Theme Restaurant & Bar

## Police stop activists from visiting Dakamseh family in Ebder village

AMMAN (Agencies) — Police said Monday they prevented 100 members of the opposition and unions from paying a solidarity visit to the family of a soldier who killed seven Israeli schoolgirls last week.

About 50 police officers blocked supporters of Ahmad Musa Dakamseh from visiting his family for security reasons, police said.

The group, including two Islamist members of Parliament and Jordan Bar Association President Hussein Mjalli, were stopped outside the village of Ebder, about 88 kilometres north of Amman, without incident.

The group then prayed in the open air for "Ahmad's victory" and the "Jews' defeat."

Mr. Mjalli told reporters that they were "expressing

their solidarity with the soldier's family" and announced "the creation of a committee to provide moral and material support to the soldier's parents."

Dakamseh, a 26-year-old driver described as suffering from psychiatric problems, suddenly opened fire on a school outing of teenage girls Thursday, killing seven students and wounding five plus a teacher.

Members of Jordan's opposition including the powerful Islamic Action Front called for a fair trial for Dakamseh.

In a statement, 21 deputies condemned the massacre at the tourist site known as island of peace on the Jordanian-Israeli border, saying the holy war mentioned in the Koran did not authorise the killing of children.

"Children must be pro-

ected, no matter what their race, sex or religion, whether they are Jews, Muslims or Christians," the deputies said.

"All accused are innocent until proved otherwise," the deputies said, calling on the government "and all those concerned with this case to stop their accusations which interfere with the course of justice and violate this citizen's rights."

The deputies also denounced what they called Israeli participation in the inquiry into the killings, saying it was a violation of Jordan's sovereignty.

"It is only natural the union of lawyers should demand that a fair trial be held for the soldier with all the guarantees of justice," Mr. Mjalli said.

Mr. Mjalli also said that a

(Continued on page 7)

## King's personal warmth makes him Israel's favourite Arab leader

BEIT SHEMESH (AP) — King Hussein has once again made the right gesture at the right time, and saved the credibility of Middle East peace in the eyes of many Israelis.

Sitting on the floor next to the parents of Sivan Fathi, a 13-year-old girl killed in a shooting spree by a Jordanian soldier last week, King Hussein patted shoulders, spoke soft words of condolence and exchanged blessings.

"Your loss is also my loss, my personal loss," he said. "You are also our King. Welcome, welcome, King of peace."

Sivan's grandfather Nissim Sharabi told him. The image of the damp-eyed monarch kneeling beside grieving Israelis, broadcast all day on TV, captured the national imagination and cemented his status as the most popular Arab in the Jewish state.

"This gesture set a new level for relations in the Middle East," said Israeli Finance Minister Dan Meridor. "We've had terrorist attacks before, but never has the leader come to console us."

The visit also appeared to sweep away the crisis in relations between Jordan and Israel's government after the Monarch exchanged angry letters with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last week.

King Hussein had criticised Israel's plans to build a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

He also expressed frustration with Israel's refusal to allow him to fly Mr. Arafat to a new airport in Gaza, where Israel is holding up an approval for operation.

Some Israeli officials had hinted that the King's criticism created a climate of tension that might have led the Jordanian soldier to open fire on a group of schoolgirls touring the border Thursday, killing seven. Relations reached their lowest point since the 1994 Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty.

By coming to Israel without conditioning the visit on cancellation of the "Har Homa" housing project, the King risked angering Palestinians and being accused of abandoning the Jerusalem cause.

Mr. Netanyahu responded by announcing Israel would allow Mr. Arafat to use the Gaza airport — but he stood firm on the settlement construction, saying it would begin this week as planned.

As a result of the King's entreaties, officials also said Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat were likely to meet later in the week in an effort to get over their own crisis in relations. One issue likely to be on the agenda is the negotiations on

the final status of the West Bank and Gaza, which had been scheduled to start on Monday but apparently will not.

The visit was the latest in a series of gestures that have endeared King Hussein to the Israeli public — and which give him credibility he might be able to use to pressure Israel's government.

Last year the King visited Tel Aviv to help inaugurate a hospital wing in memory of the assassinated Yitzhak Rabin, who signed the peace treaty with him in 1994. A few months before, he agreed to visit West Jerusalem for Rabin's funeral, becoming one of the few Arab leaders to do so.

In 1994, the Monarch won Israeli hearts by dramatically flying his plane over Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, establishing radio contact with Rabin on the ground and praising the beauty of the view.

Israeli author and columnist Zeev Chafetz said King Hussein was now more popular than Mr. Netanyahu, who won just over 50 per cent of the vote in the May election.

"Bibi is the prime minister of only half the Israelis, but Hussein is the King of all of Israel," he said, using Mr. Netanyahu's nickname. "If your army massacres a lot of little girls, you have to be pretty popular to come to Israel."

Three Associated Press adds: King Hussein is not the only Jordanian royal to charm Israelis.

His daughter, Princess Aisha, has made an impression on Israel's military.

"She's wonderful," Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said Monday of the 29-year-old Princess who is a career officer in the Jordanian army.

Mr. Mordechai said he had invited the Princess to visit the Israeli army's women's corps. "She wants to come and see how women, girls are included in the military structure," Mr. Mordechai told Israel's army radio.

Princess Aisha and her brother, Prince Faisal, accompanied their father on the visit to Israel on Sunday.

During the visit, the Princess wore her camouflage military uniform and a black beret.

Mr. Mordechai said the Princess' brother also was curious about the Israeli military. "(Prince) Faisal as a helicopter pilot, showed an interest in what is happening in the Israeli army and how to advance relations. It's a special family," Mr. Mordechai said.



## Iran should work for better Gulf ties — Prince Sultan

DUBAI (Agencies) — Iran, whose foreign minister is visiting Gulf Arab states, should take practical steps to improve relations with its Arab neighbours, Saudi Arabia's Defence Minister Prince Sultan was quoted as saying on Monday.

"Iran is a Muslim neighbouring country and we hope it takes practical steps to strengthen its relations with Gulf Arab countries based on the principle of good intentions and the principle of not interfering in the internal affairs of other countries," he told the Saudi-owned Asharq Al Awsat newspaper.

Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati was due to arrive in Qatar and later in Kuwait on Monday as part of a 10-country tour to deliver invitations to heads of state of Muslim countries and governments to attend an Islamic summit in Tehran.

Mr. Velayati has extended invitations to the December summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to Saudi Arabia's King Fahd and Oman's Sultan Qaboos.

Iran's relations are often tense with its Arab neighbours across the Gulf who have accused it of interfering in their internal affairs. Iran denies the charges.

Mr. Velayati's visit to Saudi Arabia was the first since 1993.

The Iranian foreign minister reiterated in comments in both Riyadh and Muscat his country's opposition to the role of U.S. and Western forces in the oil-rich Gulf region saying that the security of the area was the responsibility of the regional states.

"We think that the security of this sensitive region should be in the hands of its countries," Mr. Velayati told reporters in Muscat after arriving from Saudi Arabia.

"But this cannot be achieved without positive cooperation among the countries of the region through the creation of a positive atmosphere on the basis of mutual understanding."

Iran has repeatedly condemned the U.S.

military presence in the region, where U.S.-led forces enforce U.N. sanctions against Iraq. Iran says U.S. troops in the region, including about 5,000 in Saudi Arabia, increase regional tension.

Kuwaiti commentators on Monday questioned Mr. Velayati's call for security cooperation with Gulf Arab states.

"Velayati's intentions are good and acceptable" in trying to improve relations with Gulf states and calling for cooperation on regional security, a front page editorial in the English-language Arab Times said.

"The true Iran, however, is not the Iran which Velayati presented" because the Tehran government is in the grip of "phantom rulers" backing terrorist activity throughout the Arab World, according to the editorial, also carried in the Arabic sister paper Al Seyassah.

"They (phantom rulers) meddled in the internal affairs of the (Gulf Cooperation Council) states to sow terrorism and fundamentalism. This is the real Iran," it said. "Mr. Velayati's talks in Riyadh are fine, but Tehran must establish its good intentions by its actions."

Kuwait still depends on security pacts with the United States and other allies that evicted Iraqi occupying forces in 1991.

A commentator writing in the Arabic daily Al Rai Al Aam said there could be no security pact between Gulf Arab states and Iran "while the Iranian flag flies on three Arab islands."

Kuwait supports the claim by the United Arab Emirates to the three strategic Gulf islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb at the centre of a dispute with Iran.

"We accept the extended hand from Iran, but we do not want to be shaking one hand while the other is hidden to stab us in the side," the commentator said.

But he added that Mr. Velayati's visit is a "good opportunity" for talks with a "strong man" in the Tehran government.



TENSION MOUNTS: Palestinian children on their way home from school pass Israeli soldiers taking positions around Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem on Monday. The Israelis are expected to start land surveying on the site within the next few days for the building of thousands of Jewish homes (see page 1) (AFP photo)

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Israeli gun appears in Abu Dhabi

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Versions of the Israeli assault rifle Galil are on display at the Abu Dhabi arms fair, while the Jewish state itself is the only major weapons producer not invited to the exhibition. The R4, R5 and R6 guns are on show in South Africa's pavilion, which the Abu Dhabi crown prince and deputy chief of the UAE armed forces, Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahayan, toured with South African counterpart Joe Modise. "There's nothing sinister about it being here. It's a hybrid of the Galil and the (Russian) Kalashnikov rifles," an official of the makers Vektor said Monday. "It has been refined so much that it has its own identity. The internal mechanism is all Kalashnikov, it doesn't really have a Galil image anymore," he said. The official, who preferred not to be named, said the R series is made under a standard licensing accord. Israel has not been invited to the five-day Abu Dhabi defence exhibition which started Sunday.

### Lebanese man executed for murder

BEIRUT (AFP) — A 32-year-old Lebanese man convicted of murder was hanged at dawn on Monday, the seventh person executed in Lebanon in the past three years, judicial officials said. Mohammad Kour was executed at the Rumieh central prison on the outskirts of Beirut for shooting dead an elderly man, Mahmoud Mansoor, near the northern city of Tripoli in 1992, they said. The Lebanese authorities began carrying out executions in 1994 despite protests from Amnesty International and other human rights groups.

### 65 tonnes of drugs seized in Iran

TEHRAN (AP) — Authorities seized 65 tonnes of drugs in northeastern Iran and arrested nearly 4,000 drug traffickers in the past 12 months, Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency reported Monday. It quoted a senior police officer in Khorasan province as saying the drug haul was up 11 tons from the previous year. Firearms, grenades and ammunition also were seized, the agency said. Khorasan, which is 1,000 kilometres northeast of Tehran, borders Pakistan and Afghanistan. Iran says drug barons in those two countries smuggle narcotics and other contraband through Iran to markets in the Gulf and Europe. Drug trafficking carries a mandatory death sentence in Iran. Thousands of people have been hanged under the law since it was passed nine years ago.

## Iraq to attend Cairo fair; Israel is absent

CAIRO (AP) — Iraq will take part at the Cairo International Fair for the first time in six years. Trade Minister Ahmad Guweili said Sunday.

But Israel will not participate in the 10-day fair, which will open Wednesday and is to attract participants from 51 countries.

"We did not prevent Israel's participation and Israel itself did not ask to participate, therefore, it is not participating," Mr. Guweili said at a news conference.

He did not elaborate. But a government official, who asked not to be named, said Egypt had invited Israel to attend the 30th Cairo International Fair but that it had received no reply.

Israel has taken part in the previous international fairs which are held annually.

Egypt was the first Arab state to sign a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, but relations between the two countries have deteriorated since the election of Israeli right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last May. It was not clear whether Israel's decision not to attend has to do with the strained relations.

Mr. Guweili said the fair offers visitors an opportunity to see Egyptian products for themselves.

He said this year's number of participating countries had increased to 51, compared to last year's 30.

"The large number of countries participating shows that Egypt has become a country that attracts businesses," he said.

Nearly 1,000 foreign companies, in addition to 1,200 Egyptian firms, will participate.

Agricultural equipment, medicines, oil-drilling equipment and machinery are some of the products that will be on display. Among those taking part are the United States, China, Russia, Germany and other European, Arab and Asian countries.

Mr. Guweili said Iraq will not exhibit any products at the fair, but the Iraqi trade delegation will be here as a prospective buyer.

"Iraq is a brotherly Arab country and businessmen (from Egypt and Iraq) have been exchanging visits for a long time," said Mr. Guweili. "Some Egyptian companies participated in fairs held in Baghdad."

Egyptian companies have sold Iraq medicine and food, both allowed under U.N. trade sanctions imposed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The two countries severed diplomatic relations at the start of the 1991 Gulf war in which Egypt sent troops to join the U.S.-led coalition that threw Iraqi soldiers out of Kuwait. But Iraq has been moving to upgrade relations with Egypt lately.

## Sudan holds relief plane

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Security authorities have seized a foreign relief plane at Bor airport in southern Sudan on a charge of landing without permission, the armed forces said. In Nairobi, Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), which groups donors and relief agencies, identified the aircraft as a Twin Otter operated by the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The two Kenyan crew had been detained, along with a UNICEF staffer they were picking up last Friday at Bor, which is on the White Nile 200 kilometres north of the main southern town of Juba, but they were not in jail and had not been mistreated, an OLS official said.

The detention of the plane and crew came as rebels in the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) announced they were advancing towards Juba in a major dry-season offensive.

Observers in Nairobi noted that the Khartoum regime had seized relief planes in previous years as the rebels advanced, and even denied permission for flights for long periods.

Relief agencies have reduced the number of aircraft shuttling between Kenya and southern Sudan for budgetary reasons, and say it is essential to make as many flights as possible before the rains start in April or May to take in medicines for outbreaks of diseases expected during the rains, and seeds and tools for the planting season.

The OLS official said the Twin Otter, which can carry one-and-a-half tonnes of supplies, had complied with all clearance procedures and was "definitely a humanitarian flight."

In Khartoum, armed forces spokesman Mohammad Al Sanousi Ahmad said in a statement carried by Sudanese newspapers on Monday that the plane was held because it landed "without obtaining formal permission from the government."

General Ahmad said security officials who interrogated the pilot found he was carrying "important" documents he was "intending to deliver to certain authorities." He charged that the plane was operating "under relief and humanitarian action cover to serve objectives of the rebel movement and regional schemes in violation of the country's national sovereignty."

The spokesman said the flight came in the context of "providing assistance to the rebel movement and serving foreign plots against Sudan's identity, stability and unity."

## Amnesty International calls for halt to 'unfair trials' in Bahrain

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Bahraini authorities should act now to stop the unfair State Security Court trials of 59 defendants accused of involvement in an alleged Iranian-backed plot to overthrow the government, Amnesty International said yesterday, as the verdicts of the first trial are expected shortly.

"These trials have been grossly unfair at all stages, and none of the defendants will have the right to appeal before a higher court. This is particularly alarming since if convicted, some of the defendants could face the death penalty," the human rights organisation said in a statement faxed to the Jordan Times.

Irrespective of the charges against them, the accused are entitled to a fair and public trial in line with international standards, Amnesty said.

It added that a total of 81 people have been charged in this case but only 59 of them have appeared in court. "The remainder are believed to be still at large, and the government announced that they would be tried in absentia."

"Most of the session of the trials which began on March 1 have been held in camera at the Coast Guards (Khafar Al Sawahel) base in Al Muharraq. The defendants have been divided into eight groups and are being tried separately rather than as one group. Only in the first session of each trial, which involves the reading of the charges, have relatives of the accused been permitted to attend. No independent observers are able to attend the trials," Amnesty said.

"At the end of February and early March, several of the estimated 20 defence lawyers involved in the trials were interviewed by the foreign media. Shortly thereafter, all of them were summoned by the minister of justice and reportedly warned that dissemination of any

information about the trials would not be tolerated and that they would face consequences if they failed to comply with his directive."

This clearly shows that the government is intent on keeping a very tight lid on information pertaining to the conduct of these trials," Amnesty International said.

The main defendants in the case are charged with conspiring with a foreign state to carry out acts hostile to Bahrain under Article 122 of the Penal Code, an offence punishable by death. They are also charged, together with most of the other defendants, with membership of an organisation whose aim is to overthrow by force the political, social or economic system of the state under Article 159 of the Penal Code and which is punishable by up to life imprisonment. Some defendants also face charges relating to the illegal possession of firearms.

The Bahraini government claimed that the defendants are members of the military wing of a prohibited organisation, Hizbollah-Bahrain, said to be based in Tehran and assisted financially and militarily by Iran. Its alleged aim is the establishment, by violent means, of an Islamic republic in Bahrain loyal to Iran. Some of the main defendants in the case are charged with having contact with intelligence officials within Iran's Revolutionary Guards and to have received military training both in Iran and in Hizbollah camps in Lebanon.

Most of the 59 defendants were arrested at various times in early 1996, and on June 3 the Bahraini government announced that a coup plot had been uncovered. Two days later, the confessions of some of them were broadcast on Bahraini television. Several of the defendants had been arrested after being forcibly returned to Bahrain from United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

## JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

### JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

### PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 Cartoon — Budgie-The Little Helicopter  
14:30 .....Grimmy  
15:00 .....French Programmes  
16:00 .....Super Sports Follies  
16:30 .....Dog House  
17:00 Preserving for the Taste of it  
17:15 .....Album Show  
18:00 .....French Programmes  
19:30 .....News Headlines  
19:35 Comedy — Murphy Brown  
20:00 .....Super Stars of Accon  
20:30 .....Encounter  
21:10 .....The Nature of Things  
22:00 .....News in English  
22:25 .....Snowy River  
23:00 .....Mission Impossible

### PRAYER TIMES

04:22 .....Fajr  
05:39 .....(Sunrise) Duha  
11:44 .....Dhuhr  
15:09 .....Asr  
17:49 .....Maghreb  
19:06 .....Isha

### CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church  
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654932

Church of Nazareth Tel.  
675691

The Evangelical Local Church  
in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking  
Latin Catholics Parish Tel.  
614190

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Cold, rainy, partly cloudy to

cloudy weather conditions will

prevail during the day. A call air

mass accompanied by a depression

will affect the Kingdom in the

evening causing a drop in

temperatures and further rainfall.

Snow is expected to fall over

areas that are 1,200 metres

above sea level. Winds will be

westerly active. In Aqaba, rain-

fall is expected, winds southerly

moderate, and seas rough.

Amman .....05/10

Aqaba .....10/21

Deserts .....03/14

Jordan Valley .....09/18

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 13, Aqaba 23 Humid-

ity readings: Amman 58 per

cent, Aqaba 39 per cent.

### USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

#### NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Nidal Al-Ais'ad .....751673

Dr. Issam Al-Ammar .....890504

Dr. Osama Al-Husseini .....847239

Dr. Khalid Klob .....816715

Ferdows pharmacy .....778336

Al Asama pharmacy .....637055

Al Salam pharmacy .....636730

Yacoub pharmacy .....644945

Shmeisani pharmacy .....637660

Nairookh pharmacy .....623672

Najib pharmacy .....847632

#### IRIBID:

Dr. Ghazi Ta'anneh .....250080

Dr. Al-Quds pharmacy .....(—)

#### ZARQA:

Dr. Randa Shahin .....995170

Khalifeh pharmacy .....985417

### EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre .....637111

Civil Defence Dept .....661111

Civil Defence Emergency Resc-

cue .....630341

Civil Defence Emergency .....199

Rescue Police 192, 621111,

637777

Fire Brigade .....617101

Blood Bank .....775121

Highway Police .....843402

Traffic Police .....896390

Public Security Department

.....630321

Hotel Complaints .....605800

Price Complaints .....661176

Water and Sewerage Com-

plaints .....897467

Amman Municipality Com-

plaints .....787111

Telephone Information (direc-

try assistance) .....121

Overseas Calls .....010230

Central Amman Telephone

Reparis .....623101

Abdali Telephone Repairs

661101

Jordan Television .....773111

Radio Jordan .....774111

Water Authority .....680100

Jordan Electricity Authority

.....815615

Electric Power Company

636381

RJ Flight Information

0853200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-

53300

### HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre

813813/32

Khalidi Maternity .....644281/6

Akileh Maternity .....642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity

.....642362

Malhas, J. Amman .....636140

Palestine, Shmeisani .....607071

Shmeisani Hospital .....669131

University Hospital .....845845

The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37

Al-Ahli, Abdali .....664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen 77101/3

Al-Bashir .....775111/26

Army, Marka .....891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital

602240/50

Amal Hospital .....674155

The Arab Centre for Heart

and Special Surgery .....865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)83323

Zarqa National Hospital

.....091900560

Ibn Sina Hospital .....091986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital

.....091990990

IRIBID:

Princess Basma Hospital

.....021275555

Greek Catholic Hospital

102127275

Ibn Al Nafes Hospital

.....021247100

### FOR THE TRAVELLER

#### QUEEN ALIA AIRPORT



## Opposition deputies assail official statements on Baqoura attack

AMMAN (J.T.) — Opposition in the Lower House of Parliament Monday criticised statements attributed to Jordanian officials regarding investigations into the shooting of Israeli schoolgirls last Thursday and purported Israeli participation therein.

This bloc, grouping Islamists and leftists, maintained that such participation would interfere with Jordanian sovereignty as delineated in the Constitution.

Only the Jordanian military and civil judiciary are qualified to examine this case [and must be] free of all [external] intervention in the judicial process, the bloc's statement said.

"Opposition deputies reaffirm that jihad (holy war), according to the Holy Quran, Prophet Mohammad's teachings and the rulings of his successors, does not permit the killing of children," it stated.

"We believe that childhood should be protected, regardless of religion, ethnic origin or race," the deputies maintained. "This means that the blood of Jewish, Muslim and Christian children in Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan is sacred and must not be shed."

However, the statement maintained that a review of regional events, since 1946, reveals criminal acts and bloodshed committed by "the Jews, Zionist gangs and the Jewish state."

The statement cited attacks on the King David Hotel in Jerusalem under the British mandate, massacres of Arabs committed at Deir Yassin, Qibyah, Samouh, Kufor Qasem, Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, Al Ibrahim Mosque in Hebron, Qana in Lebanon, Bahr Al Baqar in Egypt, and the Sabra and Sbatilla massacres in South Lebanon as examples of Israeli atrocities.

The statement continued that "Israelis have been killing Arabs, breaking the bones of Palestinian children, burying Palestinian children alive, demolishing Arab homes and committing endless crimes."

Referring to the incident in Baqoura, the deputies proclaimed that "an observer of the circumstances which occurred before the Baqoura shooting incident could easily describe them as provocative, as the Israelis were declaring plans to Judaize Arab Jerusalem in total contempt and humiliation of the Arabs."

The statement further admonished, "should present provocation continue, the consequences would be beyond prediction."

"On this basis, statements attributed to the [Jordanian] government and members of the executive authority contradicted the provisions of the Constitution which maintain that a man is innocent until proven guilty," it stated.

The opposition enumerated "all terms used to condemn the shooting as a criminal act as illegal and harm to Jordanian soldier Ahmad Musa Dakamseh."

"They are considered interference in the judiciary process and influence the course of justice,"

The opposition bloc demanded that the government and other parties covering the case refrain from condemning Mr. Dakamseh so as not to encroach on his rights but give him the chance to defend himself before the judicial authority which, it said, is solely authorised to deal with the case.

The bloc called on the media to refrain from "poisoning the atmosphere around this case" as, it maintained, the soldier should have the right to retain legal counsel.

The shooting incident came amidst Israeli measures to set up a Jewish settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim, the statement continued and the government should "continue to condemn Israel's illegal measures and strive to halt aggression on Jerusalem and Palestine," while refraining "from using this incident as an excuse to retreat from this course (such condemnation) under American-backed Zionist pressure."

Meanwhile, the leader of the newly-formed Arab Democratic Christian Party condemned the Baqoura incident and the killing of the Israeli children.

He affirmed that although the shooting was an isolated incident, it was a crime against innocent lives.

Sami Suwadi described the attack as alien to Arab traditions and character and contradicting the excellent hospitality of the Jordanian people and armed forces.

He stated that the Jordanians who came forward to donate blood to the wounded Israelis clearly exemplify good intentions and proof that the attack was an isolated incident and that Jordan is committed to pursuing a just and durable peace in the region.

## Invitations to Palestinian conference provoke flurry of protests in Jordan

By Francesca Ciriaci  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Invitations to Jordanian writers to attend an international conference, organised by the Palestinian Writers Association (PWA) in Birzeit, provoked vigorous protests from some quarters of the Kingdom's intelligentsia.

The conference organisers intended the event, entitled "A New Vision for a New Age," to serve as an occasion for Arab writers, living and working either in Arab countries or elsewhere, to express their points of view on the Arab-Israeli peace process.

They also saw it as a forum in which they could familiarise these writers with the problems and stands of their Palestinian counterparts.

In the invitation to his Arab fellows, PWA President Izat Gazawi wrote that the conference, to be held at Birzeit University on the West Bank from March 22 to 26, aimed at "the opening of discussions, paths and bridges between different points of view on the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the formation of a moderate cultural dialogue."

But some intellectuals and politicians described the views and ideas behind the conference as "a new Zionist penetration into Arab Palestinian culture," and not only rejected the invitation, but called on their colleagues to boycott the event.

"We find these new ideas

strange and disturbing, a Zionist penetration into Arab Palestinian culture," said a statement issued last week by the National Jordanian Committee for the Protection of the Nation and the Combat of Normalisation.

Describing the Birzeit conference as "a Trojan horse to further declare cultural normalisation with the occupying Zionist enemy," the committee's statement urged authors and intellectuals not to take part in the event.

"Our disapproval stems from the continued Jewish colonisation of Jerusalem, which is an attack against Arab Palestinian identity," the statement said.

Secretary General of Jordan's strongest opposition party, the Islamic Action Front (IAF) Isahq Farhan signed the statement as head of the executive council of the committee.

"Dr. Farhan has expressed his personal political stand, and he is pretty much alone in his campaign for the boycott of the conference," commented Jordanian Writers' Association (JWA) President Ibrahim Absi.

In a telephone interview with the Jordan Times on Monday, Mr. Absi strongly rejected the view that attending the conference would serve the objectives of Israeli occupation and normalisation and endorse "the degradation of the Palestinian nation."

"This conference comes as a result of Palestinian writers' and intellectuals'

desire to make contacts with their Arab colleagues and become an active part of Arab culture," Mr. Absi stated.

"I ask Jordanian writers to attend the conference and help our Palestinian brothers, making them feel that they are not alone in their quest for a just and dignified peace, which will declare Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state."

He fought his opponents' arguments by pointing to the facts that Mr. Gazawi's son was himself a "martyr" of the intifada and that "all Palestinian writers have repeatedly stated their stand against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's policies."

"Taking part in this conference does not mean the acceptance of normalisation with Israel," stated Jamal Naji, another Jordanian writer who plans to attend the PWA's invitation.

"Israelis are not invited," he continued, adding that this will be the first PWA international conference since the signing of the 1993 Oslo agreement between the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Israel.

According to Mr. Absi, 10 Jordanian writers were invited, and six of them have already accepted to participate in the conference.

"I am sure that the others will change their minds in a few days," Mr. Absi said, adding that other invitees include writers from

Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Europe. Intellectuals from Syria and Lebanon declined the invitation, Mr. Absi said.

One of the Jordanian writers who will not attend the conference is not doing so out of personal political conviction.

Israeli authorities have prohibited literary critic and Al Dustour Arabic daily political columnist Fakhri Saleh from participating in the conference.

"I was one of the designated speakers," Mr. Saleh told the Jordan Times. "I faxed my paper to the PWA so that they could translate it for foreign participants, and one week ago I was contacted by the PWA and told that the Israeli authorities had forbidden my participation in the conference."

Mr. Saleh could not provide further details about the way the Israeli government communicated its denial to his participation, but suggested that Israeli authorities might have instructed their embassy in Amman not to issue him a visa, although the writer had not applied for a visa.

His paper dealt with "how Palestinians are trying to be more realistic in their political demands," he told the Jordan Times.

"I wanted to go, not to make contacts with Israelis or to normalise, but to meet my Palestinian colleagues and to say what I feel and think," Mr. Saleh concluded.

## Minister of transport meets with Saudi officials

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Transport Nasser Lawzi and visiting head of the Saudi Arabian Chambers of Industry Hammad Zamel Monday met to look into ways of removing obstacles to Jordanian-Saudi Arabian land transport operations and how Saudi Arabian private sector participation therein could be augmented.

Messrs. Lawzi and Zamel also explored prospects of joint investment in railway systems, particularly the establishment of a line connecting Jordan's Shidieb phosphate mines and the seaport of Aqaba, a passenger line between Amman and Zarga, and cooperation in projects undertaken by the Jordanian Ports Corporation.

Other areas include engaging the private sector in both countries in establishing joint transportation firms.

Mr. Zamel described Jor-



Saudi economic delegation Monday meets with head of the Investment Promotion Corporation Taleb Rifai as well as JEDCO Director Mohammad Halaqia. Later the Saudi delegation, headed by Hammad Zamel, met with Minister of Transport Nasser Lawzi (Petra photo)

danian-Saudi Arabian relations as very strong and he expressed hope for further efforts to enhance bilateral links.

Accompanied by a large Saudi Arabian economic delegation, Mr. Zamel earlier Wednesday met with Taleb Rifai, head of the Investment Promotion

Corporation and Mohammad Halaqia, director general of the Jordan Exports Development and Commercial Centres Corporation (JEDCO) to review Jordanian investment incentives, investment areas and economic developments over the past five years.

The Jordanian side noted that in 1996, investments amounted to JD 600 million in 245 projects and that the Kingdom currently exports to 105 countries.

Attending the meeting with Minister Lawzi was Chairman of the Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Commerce Haidar Murad.

## Pregnant woman allegedly killed by brother over issues of 'honour'

By Rana Hussein  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — In what appears to be another crime of honour, this week a 25-year-old woman was shot and killed by her younger brother in the Azmi Mufi Camp in Irbid, Sunday, an official source said.

The victim was two months pregnant, he said. Samira Farid was shot once in the chest by her brother Samir, who surrendered to police shortly after the crime was committed, the source said.

According to the source, three months ago Ms. Farid had a relation with a man

and became pregnant as a result.

A month later she married the man, the source added. The source stated that the woman's family thus resolved to kill her.

They urged their son Samir to kill his married sister to "cleanse their honour," the source, who wished to remain anonymous, added.

"Late Sunday night, Samir took his sister to an area, called Block Four in the middle of the camp, drew a gun and shot her once in the chest," he said.

Ms. Farid became the sixth woman to be killed in an honour crime since the

beginning of the year.

Last year, police statistics indicated that out of 108 murders occurring in the Kingdom, 19 were committed in the "name of honour."

Police contacted by the Jordan Times Monday evening confirmed that a woman was killed but refused further comment.

On March 8, a 15-year-old Karaki girl's head was crushed by her father after he suspected her of having a relationship with a shepherd.

In another incident, a 26-year-old woman from the Awara area of Ajloun, stabbed several times by

her husband, was Monday listed in fair condition, official sources said.

According to one source, Safieb Mohammad Hassan received several stab wounds to her neck, back and hands from her 39-year-old husband over family matters.

No further details were available.

The attending doctor at Al Iman Hospital in Ajloun, where the woman was admitted, Monday told the Jordan Times that Ms. Hassan's condition was stable and that she was expected to be released from hospital in the next few days.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Senate to convene final session

AMMAN (Petra) — The Senate will hold its last session under the chairmanship of Speaker Ahmad Lawzi. It will refer draft laws regarding the Aqaba Regional Authority and the Housing Bank to its committees.

### Ensour receives Italian delegation

AMMAN (Petra) — Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Higher Education Abdullah Ensour Wednesday received Acting Minister of Defence and Minister of Public Works and Housing Abdul Hadi Majali as well as an Italian delegation of the Higher Strategic Defence Studies Institute at the Prime Ministry. The group discussed international and regional issues, particularly the latest developments in the peace process and the Jordanian role in according impetus to the peace process. Also discussed was democratic life in the Kingdom and the development of the Jordan Armed Forces.

### Chairman receives Italian delegation

AMMAN (Petra) — Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Marei Kaabneh on Wednesday received a visiting Italian defence delegation and the group discussed scopes of cooperation and issues of common concern.

Jordan Times facsimile  
#696183

## Drop in temperatures, thunderstorms predicted

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Department of Meteorology predicted that Jordan can expect thunderstorms and heavy rain Tuesday and Wednesday, tapering off by Wednesday afternoon.

A department official maintained that a drop in temperatures is expected and that the storm will be harshest late Tuesday night through Wednesday morning, especially in the mountainous regions. He said snow and hail can be expected at altitudes of 1,200 metres above sea level and higher.

The official warned of flooding in low lying areas and poor visibility with temperatures dipping to below 5° C at night and rising to a maximum of 9° C during the day.

Meanwhile, the King Talal Dam has registered 65.68 million cubic metres (MCM) of water, an official said Monday. Another nine MCM will bring the dam up to its full capacity at 75 MCM capacity.

According to the Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) the Wadi Sheuib Dam of 1.4 MCM capacity is already full, Al Arab Dam (13.4 MCM capacity) is 80 per cent full, and the Sharhabeel Dam (2.6 MCM) is 65.6 per cent full.

## Joint committee to discuss pollution in the Jordan River

AMMAN (J.T.) — A joint Israeli-Jordanian committee is due to meet in two days to discuss pollution in the Jordan River and other related issues in the Jordan Valley, a Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) official said Monday.

The official was quoted by Al Ra'i Arabic daily as saying that Israel has informed Jordan that it plans to design a system to prevent waste water from Israeli settlements around Lake of Tiberias from flowing into the Jordan River.

The official, who requested anonymity, confirmed that the Jordan River is indeed polluted by waste from the Israeli settlements, but he said that Jordanian farmers are not yet utilising this water for irrigation.

According to the official, the committee, originally formed by a joint team entrusted with developing the Jordan Rift Valley, is also expected to discuss future joint plans in the valley.

He said that the Israeli government has submitted a plan to Jordan intended to solve the question of pollution in the Jordan River and to study means for providing safe irrigation water.

The official said that the European Union is financing a study for building dams on the Jordan River after treating its water to enable the Kingdom to utilise the water for irrigation.

The paper quoted a source at the Ministry of Water and Irrigation as saying that the Jordanian-Israeli commission on water resources development has already discussed these issues but found that the solution lies with the implementation of an integrated scheme that would take two years to complete.

The sources said that salinity of the river and water treatment of the fish pond, which also affects the river, will be discussed between the two sides.

Al Dustour Arabic daily Sunday charged that the Jordan River was being continually polluted with waste from the Israeli settlements in the northern Jordan Valley.

The report noted that the river's waters, polluted by germs and bacteria, cause major damage to Jordanian farmlands along the river. The report disclosed that the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and Environment had earlier sent a memorandum to Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti informing him of the pollution caused to the river after receiving numerous complaints from Jordanian farmers.

Al Dustour said that the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) and the Jordanian Environment Protection Corporation have analysed the water and found that it contains germs and bacteria harmful to humans. It added that the existing water is only useful to irrigate vegetables which are eaten after cooking and for evergreens.

The report said the JVA's director of operations sent a memorandum to the Jordanian side of the joint committee on water issues on Jan. 16, and enclosed copies of official reports stating that the pollution of the water takes place 15 kilometres south of the point where Yarmouk and Jordan Rivers meet, thus proving that Israeli settlements alongside the Jordan River are mainly responsible for the pollution.

The JVA report said that despite the peace treaty's provisions, Israel has failed to remove the causes of the pollution, and therefore the authority suggested that the problem could be settled by setting up waste water treatment plants in the area.

## What's Going On

### FIFTH THEATRE FESTIVAL

\*Two plays entitled "The Damned Wedding" and "The Screem" at the Royal Cultural Centre respectively at 7:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

### CONCERT

\*Performance by Quartette Monsieur B band at De La Salle College (Petra) at 8:00 p.m.

### LECTURE

\* "Environmental Education Strategies, Philosophies and Current Thinking in the U.S.: Focusing on Water" by American expert, Kerry Baldwin, Chief of Education at the Arizona State Dept. of Game and Fish Department and Dr. Charles Groat, Director of the Centre for Environmental Resources Management at the University of Texas at the American Centre, Amman at 6:00 p.m.

### EXHIBITIONS

\* Display of products for Mother's Day at Jordan River Design Room, Jabal Amman. (Tel. 613081/2), until March 21.

\* Paintings by Saad Dawood at the Orient Gallery, Issam Ajlouni St., Shmeisani, until March 31.

\* Display of handwoven products marking Mother's Day at Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman (Tel. 658696/7), until March 21.

\* Spring exhibition 1997 at Orfali Art Gallery Umm Utheima, until April 6.

\* Artworks by Mohammad Ali Shaker at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh until March 31.

\* Exhibition of Saudi products at Amman International Exhibition Centre, Marj Al Hamam, until March 20.

\* Works by Paris-based Syrian artist Ziad Dalloul at Darat Al Futun, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 3. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists.



# Zairean rebels announce end of the Mobutu era

GOMA, Zaire (AFP) — Zaire's rebels announced the end of the Mobutu Sese Seko era Monday as they continued their advance from the eastern borders of this huge central African country.

In Europe, Belgian Foreign Minister Erik Dierckx acknowledged that "the Mobutu era came to an end some time ago," adding that rebel leader Laurent-Désiré Kabila "cannot be ignored."

Mr. Mobutu, in power for 31 years, was admitted to a hospital on the French Riviera Sunday for "supplementary care" following an operation for cancer of the prostate in Switzerland last August.

The 60-year-old president, who seized power in September 1960, two-and-a-half months after independence from Belgium, and again in 1965, has spent most of the six months of civil war in Europe.

An aide said he had put off a return to his homeland indefinitely.

The rebels captured the key eastern city of Kisangani Saturday — three days after Prime Minister Kengo Wa Dondo declared "Kisangani will not fall" — and are advancing on Lubumbashi, capital of the southern province of Shaba, rich in

copper and cobalt.

They are being welcomed everywhere by jubilant populations as ill-disciplined government soldiers go on looting sprees before fleeing.

"This is the end of Kinshasa's rule; they must hand over power," said Gaetan Kakudji, the rebels' foreign affairs spokesman.

The Mobutu regime must understand that "everything comes to an end," he told journalists in Goma, the rebels' headquarters town on the border with Rwanda.

Rebel radio earlier suggested that Mr. Kabila's men might sail down the Zaire River to attack Kinshasa, in the far west, even though that was a 1,500-kilometre voyage that takes three weeks.

With the fall of Kisangani, the radio added, "the way is totally open to Gbadolite," Mr. Mobutu's home-town 600 kilometres northwest of Kisangani on the border with the Central African Republic. That would be a long trek now that the rains have started.

Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi is planning to host a regional summit on Zaire Wednesday, but did not invite Mr. Kabila because he is not a head of state, and it was unclear

Monday how many presidents would arrive for a summit billed as one which will prepare the way for another Nairobi summit on Zaire.

Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa was meeting Monday in Harare with Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe to discuss the crisis, and an African summit will be held in Lome on March 26.

Mr. Kabila has accepted in principle a five-point peace plan drawn up by Mohammad Sahnoun, the special envoy of the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity, but says that any ceasefire must be preceded by negotiations.

Mr. Kakudji hailed Belgium's stance as "a significant start" and urged France to change its policies.

In France, he said, "we are waiting for the 'young generation' to provide the hope that France will follow other policies in the future."

He said French policy on Africa, marked by "conservatism and neo-colonialism," was now in the hands of an "old guard" headed by former Interior Minister Charles Pasqua and the late Charles De Gaulle's pointman on Africa, Jacques Focart.

But Mr. Kakudji suggest-

ed that French investors might prompt changes in foreign policy.

Rebel spokesman Raphael Ghenda was harsher, accusing France of keeping company with "crazy Interahamwe killers" (Hutus who slaughtered hundreds of thousands of men, women and children during Rwanda's 1994 civil war) and "genocidal" Serb mercenaries fighting alongside "Mobutuist thieves, rapists and looters."

Rebel territory in the east now extends 1,200 kilometres along the borders with Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and Zambia, and is up to 500 kilometres wide. Mr. Kabila's forces are now on the doorstep of the diamond-mining province of eastern Kasai.

The U.N. World Food Programme meanwhile said Monday that all relief food in Ubundu, 150 kilometres south of Kisangani had been distributed to the 100,000 Rwandan and Burundian Hutu refugees there, and that warehouses in Kisangani had been looted.

Aid agencies are hoping for a green light from Mr. Kabila to resume relief flights to Kisangani.

## Primakov and Cohen discuss NATO in Pentagon 'Tank'

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov met with U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen Sunday and was briefed on NATO and arms control issues in a secure Pentagon briefing room known as "The Tank," a Pentagon spokesman said.

Mr. Primakov's talks in Washington were to set the stage for a summit in Helsinki this week between President Bill Clinton and

Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

NATO enlargement, a Russia-NATO charter, arms control issues and the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty were discussed during the meeting. Mr. Primakov's first with Mr. Cohen since he became secretary of defence, Pentagon spokesman Colonel Richard Bridges said.

Mr. Cohen and Mr.

Primakov had a short meeting in the secretary's office and then the Russian was escorted to the briefing room of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which is known as "The Tank," he said.

"The reason it was held in the Tank was because Mr. Primakov previously voiced a desire to see it," said Col. Bridges.

The Russian foreign minister met Saturday with Secretary of State Made-

leine Albright and was scheduled to cap his Washington visit with a visit to the White House Monday.

Mr. Clinton, operated for a knee injury Friday, plans to go ahead with the summit in Helsinki, expected to focus on NATO's plans to add new members and a proposed charter on relations between the Atlantic alliance and Russia.

## Strong earthquake rocks Jakarta

JAKARTA (AFP) — An earthquake reaching 5.8 on the Richter Scale shook Jakarta Monday, the highest ever quake to hit the capital, a meteorology official was quoted by the state Antara news agency as saying.

One of the heads of the Meteorology and Geophysics Office here, Taufik Rivai, said the quake hit at 3:08 p.m. (0808 GMT) with an epicentre around 300 kilometres southwest of Jakarta 33 kilometres under the Indian Ocean floor.

"This is the biggest quake ever to hit Jakarta," Mr. Ri-

vai said, adding that the quake lasted about 30 seconds.

He said that several aftershocks have been monitored by his office, but on a very low scale.

The quake sparked a panic with people pouring out of most high-rise Jakarta buildings.

By 4:30 p.m. several buildings in the centre of town told remaining occupants to evacuate, anticipating further tremors.

Heavy rains doused Jakarta about an hour after the jolt.

But there were no imme-

diates reports of damage in Jakarta and several neighbouring towns, with telephone and electricity services not interrupted.

The quake shook furniture and windows and was particularly noticeable in high-rise buildings. It was followed by several smaller tremors.

"It felt like being on the top of a tree swaying in the wind," the regional manager of a French bank said from his 25th storey office.

Seismic and volcanic activity is intense in Indonesia which is linked to the so-called Pacific rim of fire.

## 35 killed as boat capsizes in Burma

RANGOON (R) — At least 35 people were killed when a triple-decker ferry boat capsized on the Irrawaddy River in northern Burma during a sudden storm, officials said Monday.

The boat, run by the Ministry of Transport's Inland Water Transport (IWT), capsized Saturday night while sailing from Katha, about 1,290 kilometres north of Rangoon, to Burma's second city of Mandalay.

State-run newspapers said Monday that 502 passengers had been rescued and the bodies of 28 men and seven women had been recovered.

An IWT official told Reuters that rescue workers were still searching for bodies, adding that it was not known how many passengers were on the boat when it capsized.

## 11 killed in Spain road accident

MADRID (AFP) — A truck carrying North Africans trying to sneak into France flipped over in northeastern Spain, killing 11 and injuring seven others, police said Monday.

The illegal immigrants were hiding in the back of a lorry transporting bottles of perfume, the Civil Guard said.

Six of the North Africans and the driver of the truck, which had Portuguese licence plates, suffered serious injuries in the overnight accident near the town of Figueras in the Catalonia region.

The truck was 10 kilometres from the French border when it flipped over while taking a turn.

The cause of the accident was not immediately known but rescue workers said the Portuguese driver may have fallen asleep at the wheel.

Some of the injured were hospitalised in critical condition with head injuries.

The age of those killed ranged from 20 to 40.

## Hillary Clinton starts Africa tour in Senegal

DAKAR (R) — Hillary Rodham Clinton arrived in Senegal early Monday to start a two-week goodwill tour of Africa that will focus on the past, present and future of the continent.

The U.S. first lady, who delayed her six-nation tour by one day to attend to President Bill Clinton as he underwent knee surgery, said in an arrival statement that she chose Senegal as her first stop "in order to underscore the bonds of history and culture that link our two nations."

The first sitting first lady to go on a solo goodwill tour of Africa, Mrs. Clinton will also visit South Africa, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Uganda and Eritrea before returning home on March 30 after covering a total of 28,000 kilometres.

She will laud progress towards democracy and civil

society, promote better rights for women and children and get in some safari sightseeing.

Mrs. Clinton, on her ninth solo trip outside the United States, said her visit later Monday to Senegal's Goree Island, once a hub of the West African slave trade, was "an important symbol of our historic ties."

"While it evokes biter memories of the horror of the slave trade, it also bears witness to the strength and resilience of the human spirit," she said in the written statement. "America has been enriched by the talents of so many people who trace their origins to this region."

Mrs. Clinton arrived at 2:25 a.m. (2:25 GMT, 9:25 est Sunday) at the Dakar Airport and was met by Senegalese officials and U.S. ambassador to Senegal Dane Smith. She retired to a

hotel for a few hours of sleep before beginning the trip in earnest later Monday with a full schedule.

In spite of the delay because of her husband's injury, aides said she would be able to complete her schedule in Senegal but would have to compress some events.

Accompanied by her 17-year-old daughter Chelsea, her chief of staff Maggie Williams and other aides, Mrs. Clinton planned to stay in frequent telephone contact with her husband as he begins a long healing and rehabilitation process.

Her trip is designed to take a look at Africa's past, its present trend toward democracy and improved human rights in some nations and its hoped-for future as a vibrant economic and democratic power.

Senegal, she said, "repres-

sents the future of Africa. Its democratic tradition is strong and vibrant. Its commitment to economic and social development is enhancing the lives and welfare of its people."

Besides Goree Island, Mrs. Clinton will also tour Saam Njaay Village, where citizens are being trained in the Institutions of Democracy; tour the Martin Luther King School for Girls, and pay a courtesy call on Senegal's President Abdou Diouf before departing late Monday for Johannesburg, South Africa.

A senior State Department official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Mrs. Clinton's trip was important to maintain strong ties with a continent of 600 million people and to show Americans why it is important to remain engaged around the world.



A policeman stands guard in front of the Adda'wa Mosque after a bomb exploded wrecking the entrance and slightly wounding the guard of the building Monday. No one has claimed responsibility for the explosion (Reuters photo)

## Bomb targets Paris mosque

PARIS (AFP) — A bomb went off early Monday at the entrance to a mosque in northern Paris, causing damage and slightly injuring a caretaker, police said.

There was no claim of responsibility for the attack, but authorities did not immediately call in anti-terrorist investigators, assigning the investigation to regular detectives.

The explosion damaged the porch to the building in the working class 19th Arrondissement, and shattered windows in other buildings.

The caretaker suffered a hand injury.

Police said the bomb was packed in a fire extinguisher and left outside the door of the mosque, housed in a 10-storey building whose windows were almost all blown

out, according to a local resident.

Paris and the rest of France have been on heightened alert since the December bomb blast at Port Royal Metro Station killed four people and injured more than 90, reviving fears of Islamic fundamentalist-linked violence.

Divisions between different Muslim factions in France, in particular over financial affairs, have also caused tensions but have not usually been accompanied by violence.

Thousands of extra police and gendarmes have been drafted onto the streets of the French capital amid fears of a resumption of a wave of Algerian-linked bomb attacks in 1995.

That series of bombings

came shortly after the assassination of a Muslim cleric known for his moderate views, shot down outside his mosque in another Paris district.

Two apparently unconnected blasts have been reported recently in Paris. Last Thursday a booby-trapped package exploded Thursday in a store in the popular Latin Quarter in central Paris, injuring the shopkeeper.

Early last month a small explosive device caused damage but no casualties at a Paris university housing complex. There was no claim of responsibility.

Investigations into the mosque attack were continuing.

## 2 killed in attack on Brussels cafe

BRUSSELS (AFP) — Assaults hurled explosive devices at a Brussels cafe Monday, igniting a fire that left two people dead, five wounded and two missing, police said.

The explosives, which police said were probably Molotov cocktails, were thrown from a car at the outside of the cafe in the working-class Molenbeek neighbourhood at about 4:00 a.m. (0300 GMT).

The motive of the attack was not immediately known.

The explosives sparked a fire which destroyed the four-storey building housing the cafe. The blaze was

brought under control by firemen during the early part of the morning.

Police found the bodies of two men, aged 46 and 37, in the rubble of the cafe. Two elderly people were reported missing. The injured were a 33-year-old woman and her four children, whose ages ranged from four to 13.

Brussels investigators visited the scene but gave no details on who might have been behind the attack. Police said no lines of enquiry were excluded.

Molenbeek has a large immigrant population and the cafe was run by Moroccans.

According to the radio station RTBF, the establishment was also known in the neighbourhood as a place where drugs were dealt and gambling took place.

BEL-RTL private radio said that political meetings were also held in the cafe and Molenbeek Mayor Philippe Moureaux sometimes attended.

Mr. Moureaux is deputy president of the Belgian Francophone Socialist Party. He was also formerly close to former Socialist Deputy Prime Minister Andre Coombs, who was assassinated in July 1991 in Liege.

## Guard kills five and shoots himself in Philippine bank

MANILA (AFP) — A Manila bank guard ran amok Monday killing five people with his shotgun before shooting himself, police said.

Two other security guards were wounded and a bank employee went to hospital with shock after the rampage at the Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. in the suburb of Quezon City.

Guards were preparing to start work, when the 23-year-old Argie Fullon took his shotgun and began shooting at random shortly after 8:00 a.m., witnesses said.

Fullon then put the gun barrel in his mouth and pulled the trigger, they added.

Bank employee Jay Ang said there would have been more casualties if the shooting had happened during business hours.

Three security guards, the driver of an armoured car and a janitor were killed instantly. All sustained several gunshot wounds, witnesses and bank employees said.

Two guards were wounded but managed to crawl out of the office.

The bank's female assistant branch manager locked herself in a rest room and was unharmed but was taken to hospital with shock, officials said.

"One of the guards told me

that Fullon was not firing at the woman," Generoso Flores, a doctor who operated on the wounded guards, told AFP, adding that the two were now "out of danger."

The bank remained closed as employees cleaned up broken glass, pools of blood and pairs of shoes of the dead guards that littered the lobby.

Abraham Aquino, another guard who escaped unharmed, told state-run television that Fullon suddenly began firing without provocation.

"I was only able to run when Fullon had to stop to reload his gun," Mr. Aquino said.

## Colombian defence minister steps down

BOGOTA (R) — Colombian Defence Minister Guillermo Alberto Gonzalez resigned Sunday, bowing to military pressure to step down after revealing that his congressional campaign accepted money from a reputed drug kingpin in 1989.

President Ernesto Samper had pledged his full support for Mr. Gonzalez Friday, soon after the defence minister issued a statement revealing the campaign contribution from billionaire Justo Pastor Perafan, a fugitive from justice since February 1996.

But a government official said Mr. Samper and Mr. Gonzalez had jointly decided, in day-long talks Sunday, that there was no alternative to his immediate resignation.

"I consider your separation from the Defence Ministry the most expedient decision under the current circumstances," Mr. Samper said in his letter accepting Mr. Gonzalez's resignation. The move, he added, would help "preserve Colombia's international credibility in the fight against drugs."

The government official consulted by Reuters said he was unable to confirm or deny reports that the military had pressed for Mr. Gonzalez's removal. But senior military source told Reuters that armed forces commander Gen. Harold Bedia issued a virtual ultimatum to Mr. Samper Friday by telling him that he and other top military officials would step down if Mr. Gonzalez sought to cling to office.

Mr. Gonzalez, who quietly criticised the military's poor human rights record since he took office less than two months ago, had clearly angered senior army officials by publicly supporting calls for deep-rooted reform of military justice.

Army leaders refrained from clashing with Mr. Gonzalez over the human rights issue in public. But Gen. Bedia and others also pointedly refused to voice their support for him Friday, after his statement acknowledging that his campaign accepted a \$3,000 donation from Mr. Perafan in 1989.

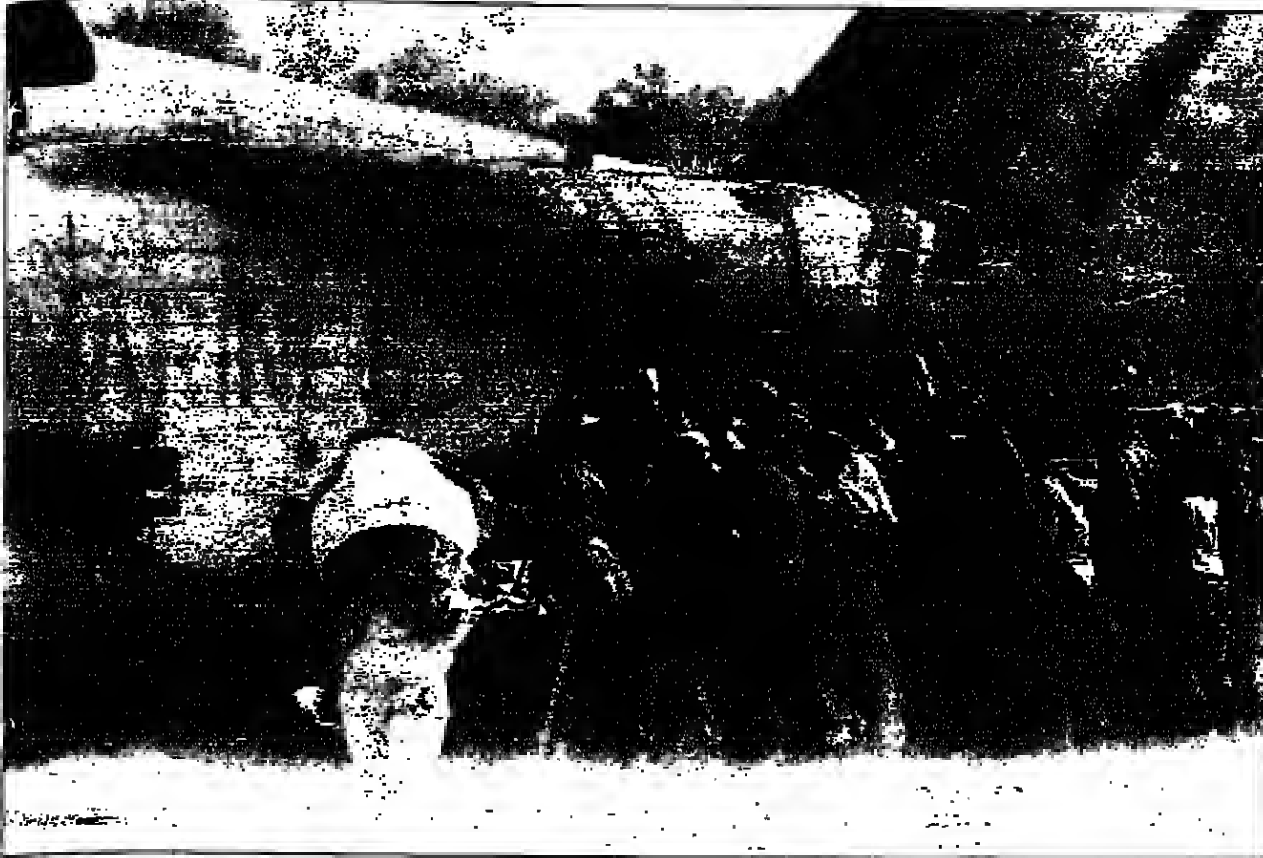
Mr. Gonzalez and Mr. Perafan, both in their 50s, grew up in the same town in south west Colombia and his ties with the alleged drug lord were the focus of hard-hitting reports in the local media even before he was appointed in January to succeed Juan Carlos Esquerro, who Mr. Samper had just named as ambassador to Washington.

Mr. Gonzalez admitted having social dealings with Mr. Perafan in the past. But he also insisted that there was no reason to suspect him of criminal wrongdoing until February 1996, when a warrant was issued for his arrest on the drug-related charge of "illicit enrichment."

Mr. Perafan's net worth is estimated by Semana, Colombia's leading news magazine, at \$12 billion and he is said to have business interests in Madrid, Rome and Moscow as well as throughout Colombia. Police are offering a \$500,000 reward for information leading to his arrest.

It may never be known if Mr. Gonzalez was forced out of office because of his stance on human rights, or because of his newly discovered "clay feet." But Mr. Gonzalez dismissed any military pressure for his removal in a television interview late Sunday and described himself as a victim of "the witch hunt currently going on in Colombia" when it comes to drug corruption in government.





Frantic Albanian civilians push to board the last U.S. Marines Sea Station helicopter in Gomame Beach near the port town of Durres. U.S. Marines stormed onto the beach in an effort to evacuate foreign diplomats still in the country, when hundreds of civilians rushed in an attempt to flee the country (Reuters photo)

## China, South Korea deny N. Korean defector crisis is over

BEIJING (AFP) — China and South Korea denied Monday the protracted crisis over North Korea's highest-level defector was finished amid reports that the top ideologue had already flown out of Beijing.

"The reports that Mr. Hwang Jang-Yop has left Beijing are groundless," said a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman. "We have nothing more to add."

South Korean embassy spokesman Chang Moon-ik insisted Mr. Hwang, 74, was still held up in the building where he sought asylum on Feb. 12.

In Seoul, a high-ranking Foreign Ministry official told the Yonhap news agency that negotiations between China and South Korea were not yet complete.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, added that he hoped Mr. Hwang "will be able to depart Beijing by the end of the week if negotiations go smoothly."

Mr. Hwang and his aide Kim Dok-Hong walked into the South Korean consular section during a stopover in Beijing and threw Beijing into a cold war-style diplomatic battle between its erstwhile Communist ally in the North and its new trading partners in the South.

Speculation that Mr. Hwang would finally leave the mission after nearly five weeks, rose Sunday after South Korea's ambassador to Beijing visited Mr. Hwang, mastermind of the isolationist North's policy of self-reliance.

Five hours later three police vans sped out of the area, witnesses and diplomatic sources said.

In Tokyo, the Japan Broadcasting Corp. (NHK) said Mr. Hwang has "most likely" boarded a plane that left a Beijing military airport for Manila early Monday.

But the 16-seat plane never materialised in Manila, while a group of U.S. executives were shocked at the crowds of reporters as they disembarked from their private jet from Beijing.

Witnesses in Beijing said South Korean Ambassador Chung Chong-Wook arrived after dark, around 7:30 p.m., on Sunday at the heavily-guarded South Korean consular

section. He left half an hour later.

Diplomatic sources reported increased activity around the building — which is surrounded by other embassies — throughout the evening and said three Chinese police vans sped out of the blockade around 1:00 a.m. Monday.

The South's Yonhap news agency speculated that Mr. Hwang could have been moved in one of the three vans.

But Yonhap also quoted Ambassador Chung Chong-Wook denying that Mr. Hwang had been in one of the vans.

"The speculation that Hwang has left the consulate is untrue," the ambassador was quoted as saying.

"I think a solution is near," South Korean embassy spokesman Chang Moon-ik told AFP.

On Friday Chinese Premier Li Peng also indicated a solution to the crisis was imminent. "The conditions are nearly ripe to solve this issue," he said.

However, Chinese security outside the South Korean consular section remained extremely tight.

Six armoured personnel carriers and an anti-riot water cannon surrounded the building, while armed paramilitary police blocked all four roadways leading to the consulate with concrete blocks, spikes and police cars.

Daily food supplies arrived in the late afternoon as they have done for their last 34 days in plastic boxes.

Chinese sources have indicated that Mr. Hwang must pass through a third country on his way to Seoul, but his planned route remained uncertain.

Philippine Foreign Secretary Domingo Siazon confirmed the Philippines was engaged in talks for Mr. Hwang to travel via Manila. But he said other routes were also being considered.

However, South Korean embassy spokesman Chang denied any knowledge of Manila as a possible route.

A Singapore Foreign Ministry spokesman denied the country had been approached to act as the exit route.

## Yeltsin brings another reformer into government

MOSCOW (AFP) — President Boris Yeltsin brought a reformer, 37-year-old Boris Nemstov, into Russia's government Monday as first deputy prime minister.

Mr. Yeltsin announced on television that Mr. Nemstov had accepted the post.

The governor of the Nizhny-Novgorod region, 400 kilometres east of Moscow, will be the second first deputy prime minister in the reformed government alongside Anatoli Chubais, 41, a leading market reformer who played a key role in Russia's 1992-1994 mass privatisation.

"You and Anatoli Chubais in the government will create a young and new team, starting from scratch. You have the experience, authority and know-how to succeed," Mr. Yeltsin told Mr. Nemstov.

Mr. Nemstov met with Mr. Yeltsin at the Kremlin early Monday and was expected to have another meeting later in the day with Mr. Yeltsin, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and Mr. Chubais, the spokesman said.

Interfax News Agency quoted sources as saying Mr. Nemstov would be in charge of social issues and relations between Moscow and regional officials.

Only a few days ago Mr. Nemstov said he would not accept a government post. But that was before Mr. Yeltsin offered him a "first" deputy premier position.

The title "first" deputy prime minister, as its name implies, ranks higher than deputy premier. There were three in the outgoing administration.

Mr. Yeltsin had said last week there would be only one "first" deputy premier in his reformed administration.

Mr. Nemstov, who comes from Sochi, is a radiologist by training, and is an advocate of economic reform. He was appointed Mr. Yeltsin's representative in Nizhny-Novgorod in 1991 at the age of 32.

Many Democrats had hoped Mr. Nemstov would stand for president in the July 1996 elections. But he preferred to back Mr. Yeltsin.

Mr. Yeltsin announced the government reorganisation last week and gave Mr. Chernomyrdin a week to draw up a new streamlined cabinet.

On Friday the president promised to give new impetus to Russia's market reforms and bring many new faces into the government in the drive to improve economic management.

## Socialist leader tells Berisha to quit as EU heads for Albania

TIRANA (AFP) — The leader of Albania's Socialist Party called on President Sali Berisha to resign Monday as EU officials were set to arrive in the country to help end a violent two-week popular uprising.

Fatos Nano, a former prime minister, was speaking a day after receiving a presidential pardon for corruption charges that had landed him in jail. Asked if Mr. Berisha's resignation was desirable, he said: "Politically, no. Morally, yes."

Rebels who have seized control of many towns in the south of the country say they will not give up their weapons until Berisha goes, but the president has insisted he will not resign unless his Democratic Party loses upcoming elections. Mr. Berisha has promised to hold early elections by June.

Mr. Nano also gave his backing to the government of Socialist Prime Minister Bashkim Fino.

He said the new government was "the main authority that could bring Albania to normality again."

Mr. Fino's government has managed to restore a semblance of order in Tirana and several other towns with the help of volunteer militias, and residents are starting to hand in plundered weapons.

On Monday, Mr. Fino appealed to local and central government officials to return to work Monday in a message relayed via official media.

Mr. Berisha himself said Monday that the "danger of

civil war" was now "remote" and that a "fragile calm" was reigning in the country.

However, he added in comments to Europe 1 radio that the "weapons which people have seized pose a danger to public order and to the people themselves."

Albania is awash with looted arms and many of the casualties of the last two weeks' violence have been caused by stray bullets and shooting accidents.

Hospital sources in Shkoder, the biggest city in northern Albania which is now in rebel hands, said one more person had been killed and four injured in shooting incidents overnight Sunday.

The new death brings the total killed since Feb. 28, when residents angry over the collapse of savings schemes began looting arms depots, to 81.

Meanwhile, a 48-hour EU mission headed by Dutch senior Foreign Ministry official Count Jan D'Ansembourg was due to arrive in the country Tuesday.

The mission will be tasked with helping Albanian authorities rebuild civilian, police and military infrastructures which collapsed in disarray as mobs furious over the collapse of savings schemes looted arms depots and ransacked towns.

However EU officials remain divided over the extent of European involvement in the Albanian crisis.

At a two-day meeting from Saturday in Apeldoorn in the Netherlands, the EU finally settled for a proposal

to send civilian, police and military experts to Albania.

But there was no agreement on whether to send troops to provide security for this "advisory mission," a statement simply saying "consideration will be given to the needs of the mission for protection."

Italy and Greece and to a lesser degree France wanted a European intervention force of several thousand men to be deployed in Albania to help restore order, but the idea was bitterly opposed by Britain and Germany.

Turkey's Foreign Ministry Sunday said it wanted NATO and the Western European Union, the EU's fledgling defence grouping, to take an active role in restoring order.

It also said it would look "positively" at involvement in an international force for Albania if one was created, reminding the West of "the heavy price" paid by Bosnia and the world community for delays in intervening there.

Italy's Foreign Ministry said Albanian Foreign Minister Arian Starova had asked to attend a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels on March 24.

In a separate development, an Albanian military vessel transporting more than 500 people fleeing the chaos in their country sank off the Italian coast Monday but its passengers were rescued by Italian warships, maritime officials said.

The stricken vessel sank off the coast of San Cataldo De Lecce, near the

southeast town of Otranto. Authorities in Otranto said there were no victims and the rescue operations were proceeding smoothly thanks to good weather conditions.

Italian Coast Guards said they had already recovered 120 passengers that were to be transferred to an unknown location.

The captain on board the Albanian ship said the excess number of passengers may have caused the boat to sink.

Italian officials were alerted that the ship was in trouble overnight after it became stranded about eight nautical miles away from San Cataldo De Lecce because it had run out of fuel.

A fishing boat with around 150 people on board had been escorted overnight as far as Otranto by an Italian Coast Guard's boat and was about 12 nautical miles from the coast Monday morning.

Another fishing boat with 182 people on board arrived in Brindisi earlier.

The crew were arrested and the town's chief of police, Antonio Ruggieri, announced that "in future, all Albanian ships and sea-going craft which arrive in Brindisi with illegal immigrants on board will be seized."

Between 4,000 and 5,000 Albanian refugees have arrived in Italy over the last few days to flee the insurrection in their country.

Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi Sunday appealed to the refugees to stay at home.

## U.S. committed to Taiwan security, Powell says

TAIPEI (AFP) — The former chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff stressed here Monday that while the Clinton administration has been conducting comprehensive engagement with Beijing, the security of Taiwan continues to be an American concern.

General Colin L. Powell said, despite his retirement from the U.S. army, as far as he knew "your security remains number one priority for the United States."

While encouraging the Nationalist Taiwan to re-sum contacts with its arch-rival China, Gen. Powell said Taiwan "has reasons to be cautious" and to keep its eyes "wide open."

China unilaterally suspended talks with Taiwan following the landmark visit to the

United States in mid-1995 by Taiwanese President Lee Teng-Hui. Beijing opposes any overseas visits by leaders from Taiwan, which it regards as a renegade province.

Gen. Powell, one of the most popular public figures in the U.S., made the remarks in a keynote address to Citibank customers and employees, on "challenges and leadership in a changing world."

Gen. Powell made identical remarks before meeting with Taiwanese Foreign Minister John Chang earlier Monday.

Speaking of Washington's arms policy towards Taiwan, Gen. Powell said he believes the U.S. would do everything it can to "ensure Taiwan has sufficient defence capability."

In a gesture to ensure regional security, the Clinton administration sent a aircraft-

carrier battle group to waters near Taiwan last spring when the People's Liberation Army held missile tests and war games apparently to intimidate pro-independence groups on the Nationalist island.

The general and his wife Alma Powell flew into Taipei Monday for a two-day visit, his first trip to the island, as part of the 1997 Citibank Asian leadership series.

Gen. Powell also attended a book signing event for his best-selling autobiography *My American Journey*.

Asked whether or not Gen. Powell would join the next American presidential election, his wife said his decision not to run was unchanged.

"Our reasons are the same," she said. Describing Gen. Powell as a "successful hus-

band" over the last 35 years, she added: "Fa-milly always comes first."

Gen. Powell is one of the most admired and respected men in America, an authentic hero. In his distinguished military career he became the youngest person and first African-American to be named Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The Los Angeles Times wrote after the Gulf War, "he became a folk hero," while Vanity Fair saluted him as "a war hero, political outsider and racial healer."

Gen. Powell served as the 12th chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from Oct. 1, 1989 to Sept. 30, 1993 under both George Bush and Bill Clinton. After 35 years of service to the U.S., he retired on Sept. 30, 1993.

## South Korean Presidential office implicated in Hanbo scandal

SEOUL (AFP) — A jailed ex-presidential aide told a court here Monday that two former economic advisors to President Kim Young-Sam were involved in a murky graft scandal which saw apple boxes stuffed with payoff cash change hands.

Outside the court the president's son, Kim Hyun-Chul, 38, said he was ready to face punishment if he too was found to be implicated in the scandal.

"I am ready to take any kind of punishment for my wrongdoings, if any," he said, adding that he was prepared to face a parliamentary enquiry.

The court disclosure and Mr. Kim's son's statement brought the scandal right to the doorstep of the president, who has been fighting a losing battle since January to salvage his reputation from the damaging fallout of the case.

Hong In-Gil, a ruling party MP and former fund manager for the president, made his accusation on the opening day of the trial of 10 high-profile figures indicted in the loans-for-kickbacks case involving the Hanbo Business Group.

He replied "Yes" to prosecution charges that at his request, the two then-presidential aides helped Hanbo obtain \$800 million in

improper loans. Mr. Hong also admitted receiving three apple boxes, stuffed with cash, from Hanbo. He identified the advisors as Han Yi-Horn and Lee Suk-Chae, who had successively served in the president's office as his top economic advisors.

Mr. Han, now a ruling party MP, immediately called a press conference to deny that his involvement constituted pressure.

But while saying he had not followed up on a request from Mr. Hong to solicit the loans, Mr. Han said his memory was hazy.

"I don't remember ... I don't clearly recall. I don't want to say he (the bank chief) was lying," Mr. Han said.

The second former economic advisor was sacked earlier this month when the president reshuffled the cabinet, his advisors and the ruling New Korea Party (NKP) to soothe public anger over Hanbo.

The scandal erupted in January when Hanbo, the country's 14th largest conglomerate, crumbled under a \$5.7 billion debt.

Mr. Hong's testimony tended to substantiate opposition charges that the presidential office was directly involved in the scandal.

Kim Young-Sam himself has denied receiving a

penny from businessmen since his inauguration in early 1993. He sent his two predecessors as president to jail for massive graft and involvement in a coup.

The other nine on trial Monday were Hanbo founder Chung Tae-Soo, a Hanbo executive, a dismissed home minister, three other MPs and three former bank chiefs.

"I received an apple box with \$115,000 stuffed in it in December last year," said Hwang Byung-Tae, an influential ruling party MP.

As the trial opened, Kim Hyun-Chul made his public apology and offered to face a new investigation and punishment for any wrongdoings.

"This is the only way to relieve the misgivings of my father and the people," he said.

Opposition parties accuse the son, who has no official position, of being at the centre of the scandal and with meddling unethically in government affairs.

The son was investigated by prosecutors last month but declared innocent of involvement in Hanbo, sparking charges of a cover-up.

"I deeply repent doing what I did out of a wish to help my father ... I wept endlessly seeing my father bow to the people apologising for what I have done," the son said.

## Afghanistan's Taliban close Salang Highway

KABUL (R) — Afghanistan's Islamic Taliban militia, citing security reasons, closed the Salang pass connecting Kabul with the op-position-held north Monday.

The Defence Ministry said in a statement that travellers must not use the Salang route because of "looting, disrespect and danger to life" in the area posed by troops of northern opposition leader General Abdul Rashid Dostum.

The statement, broadcast on the Taliban's Voice of Sharia radio Sunday, also noted that no accommodation was available for travellers in Charikar and Jabal-Os-Siraj, the main towns south of the Salang Pass over the Hindu Kush Mountain range.

It was not immediately clear what had prompted the

order to close the road, already blocked to most traffic since Gen. Dostum blew up a bridge and a portion of the Salang Pass in January to halt a Taliban offensive threatening his northern heartland.

In January, the Taliban rolled Gen. Dostum's forces back to the foothills of the Salang heights, about 100 kilometres north of Kabul, but Gen. Dostum kept control of the Soviet-built tunnel that cuts through the towering 3,363-metre pass.

At the same time, the Taliban bonied up forces loyal to former government military commander Ahmad Shah Masoud in his Panjsher Valley stronghold southeast of the Salang.

Most civilians in the mainly ethnic Tajik-populated

Shomali Valley stretching from the outskirts of Kabul to Jabal-Os-Siraj were forced from their homes by the fighting or by Taliban efforts to pacify the newly-captured areas.

Many fled to Kabul, destitute and terrified, and the Taliban have allowed only a few to return, despite the risk that food production in the fertile Shomali Valley will plummet if farmers do not go back before the planting season in a few weeks' time.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), about 125,000 people from the area had fled to Kabul by March 12 and only 1,400 had been able to return in the past three weeks.

UNHCR spokesman Rupert Colville said the Taleban

were not letting whole families return with their possessions, but were allowing individuals or small groups back without baggage.

The mainly ethnic Pashtun Taleban, who captured Kabul on Sept. 27, have vowed to extend their strict interpretation of Islamic Sharia Law to the whole of Afghanistan.

In another edict broadcast on Voice of Sharia, the Taleban Traffic Department ordered drivers of trucks and other vehicles to remove any plastic dolls or pictures used as adornments.

It said the rule emanated from the department for promoting virtue and preventing vice, which is keen to enforce a ban on what the Taleban regard as un-Islamic images.

## FMLN takes early lead in key El Salvador votes

SAN SALVADOR (R) — The left-wing Farabundo Martí Liberation Movement (FMLN) took an early lead Sunday in nationwide elections for El Salvador's congress and the office of mayor in the capital.

The country's electoral tribunal released initial results late Sunday that showed the FMLN had a total of 82,826 votes, or 38.5 per cent of the total counted, in the Central American nation.

The ruling right-wing National Republican Alliance (ARENA) obtained 75,590 votes, or 35.1 per cent of the

total. Other parties gained smaller percentages in the vote, which appeared to be a slap in the face for El Salvador President Armando Calderon Sol, a member of the ARENA party.

The president of the ARENA in the legislative assembly, Gloria Salguero, recognised the defeat of the FMLN by the FMLN, which had transformed itself from a guerrilla movement into a democratic party.

"We recognise that the preliminary results indicate that we had not maintained

a quantity of deputies and mayors," Ms. Salguero said. The Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) said it was satisfied with the way the vote took place.

"I see that the Salvadorian people, apparently all the way to the national level, have decided to try an adventure. I think that the adventure will be dangerous, but if it is the will of the people we are going to respect it," Mario Valiente, ARENA director and current mayor of the capital San Salvador told a news conference.

He also recognised the

victory of his rival for the post of mayor of the capital, Doctor Hector Silva, who led a coalition headed by the FMLN.

"I am ready to govern," Dr. Silva, 49, told reporters. Turnout appeared to be low but voting took place in an atmosphere of calm under the watchful eye of about 10,000 police and 1,000 international observers.

About 2.6 million voters had been eligible to choose from among 13 parties to fill positions for 84 deputies in congress and for 262 mayors.



## Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily, published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation  
 Established 1975  
 جريدة الأردن السياسية المستقلة، المنشورة بالإنجليزية من قبل مؤسسة الصحافة الأردنية، تأسست 1975

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 Jordan Press Foundation,

University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.

Telephones: 684311, 699634

Telex: 21497 ALRAJ JO

Facsimile: 696183

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays.  
 Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times advertising department.

## Problem too big for panel

THE ANNOUNCEMENT made at the conclusion of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's talks with King Hassan II of Morocco in Rabat last week calling for the Organisation of Islamic Conference's (OIC) Committee on Jerusalem to meet by the end of March will not on its own allay Arab and Islamic fears about the future of the city. At a time when Israel is busy creating new facts on the ground by building more settlements in and around East Jerusalem, the OIC appears to be reacting too little too late against the dangers that loom in the horizon. Instead of calling for a "meeting" to deal with Israel's determination to go ahead with its plans to Judaize the entire city and isolate it from the rest of the West Bank, the Islamic World should have taken pre-emptive actions and measures of the kind that will impress on the Israelis its seriousness to safeguard the Arab character of the occupied city.

Israeli bulldozers are scheduled to start work on Jabal Abu Ghneim this week and well before the Committee on Jerusalem will even convene to "talk" about this dangerous action. It is hard to imagine what the committee can do to stop the Israeli plans especially when even the U.N. General Assembly's recent resolution condemning the construction of the new settlement failed to budge Israel. The slow and weak Islamic reaction cannot but give the impression to Prime Minister Netanyahu and the entire international community that both the Arab and Muslim worlds are anything but serious about countering his right-wing government's designs.

The least that we can expect by way of showing genuine concern is to call for a joint Arab and Islamic summit with an agenda that prescribes effective actions and measures to bolster the Arab presence in Jerusalem. These would have to include financial investment and economic aid to the Arab sector. Much of the Arab lands of Jabal Abu Ghneim, for example, was sold to American Jews before our very eyes. Elsewhere in the city, Palestinian properties have also been sold to the Israelis. There is an urgent need for a fund to prevent the rest of the Arab real estate in Jerusalem from changing hands to the other side.

On the political front, a strongly worded commitment that the Arab and Muslim worlds will never accept Washington's submission that East Jerusalem is not an occupied territory on which the Geneva Convention of 1949 applies is obviously overdue. Strengthening Jordan's hand in dealing with Israel over East Jerusalem would also go a long way to avoid any further erosion of the Arab status of the city. His Majesty King Hussein had succeeded in the past in rescind earlier Israeli plans to confiscate more Palestinian lands. The King was able, for instance, to convince the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to cancel plans to expropriate Palestinian properties. Left on their own, the Palestinians do not have equal power to deal with the Likud-led government. Therefore they urgently need every support they can get from us. Let all Arabs and Muslims try in earnest not to fail them.

## ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

KING HUSSEIN'S call for administrative reform is timely and should be heeded immediately, but the first area to undergo change should be that of the bureaucrats who are seated at the top of the civil service system, said Faded Fakki, a writer for Al Rai. The lower-rank employees are normally competent and loyal despite the meagre salaries they receive at the end of the month, but those at the top of the ladder are responsible for the inefficient work, charged the writer. Citing the passport department as an example, the writer said that whereas obtaining a renewed passport used to take days, nowadays citizens can obtain their renewed passports in hours, counting on the same staff, and this is due to the change that brought about a competent director to the helm of this department. Furthermore, he said, this director, Nasouh Mohamed, was later appointed as the head of the Public Security Department and there he revolutionized the procedures without changing the staff. Under the new director, the renewal of a driving licence, which used to take a whole day, can now be obtained in one hour, noted the writer. He said one cannot blame the ordinary employees but rather the regulations and the qualifications and competence of the ministers, heads of departments and others in responsible positions.

IN LIGHT of the current Israeli practices in the occupied Palestinian lands, of Benyamin Netanyahu's determination to build a Jewish settlement in the area of Arab Jerusalem and of his defiance of the Arab feelings and disregard to their rights, one can conclude that there is no way for any peace with the Jewish state, said a writer in the weekly Al Majd. It has become clear that the Israelis will neither change their arrogance nor halt their illegal practices nor will they end their occupation of Arab territories and therefore, only the ignorant, the naïve or the agents of Israel still believe that peace is possible in this region, said Faded Rimawi. He charged that the Israelis have allowed the Wadi Araba treaty and the Oslo accords to be concluded only to allow the Arabs to vent their repressed anti-Zionist feelings and allow for a breathing space for them to gain more time while they continue their drive to Judaize the Arab lands. It is clear that there is a total contradiction between Israel and the Arabs in ideology and in aspirations; therefore the Arabs are now in agreement that the peace process is dead and all prospects for peaceful co-existence and normalisation are nothing but a mirage.

## The View from Fourth Circle

## What madness murders praying men and picnicking girls?

By Rami G. Khouri

THIS HAS been a week of much drama and pain in our region, but also a very revealing week that clarifies important aspects of the delicate state of Arab-Israeli peace making. Three separate dynamics have become mixed together but should be analysed separately: Israeli-Palestinian relations, Jordanian-Israeli ties and the emerging relationship among the three parties. The Jordanian-Israeli relationship sheds light on the other dimensions of this region today.

Investigations will clarify whether the killing of seven Israeli schoolgirls by a lone Jordanian soldier in Baqura last week was the isolated act of an unbalanced individual or a manifestation of deeper political anger against Israelis among the Jordanian public. There is no real difference, in the end, for in either case we must come to grips with the twin personal and political dimensions of this incident and others like it.

The personal dimension is the immense tragedy and pain of the loss of innocent lives, heightened in this case by the multiple symbolism of the people and the place — children, girls, students, going on a picnic, on an "island of peace," on a piece of Jordanian land farmed by Israelis, according to the terms of a peace treaty that has produced an Arab-Israeli frontier of trustful interaction and often warm cooperation. King Hussein was right when he said that all of us share the pain of the families of the dead and injured Israeli girls, because we too have children who deserve to go on picnics without fear of being shot dead. The grief and the pain that we have witnessed in Israel this week are not peculiarly Israeli — they are universal, and they are the result of a damnable crime and tragedy.

The political dimension of this incident cannot be ignored, however strong is the personal pain, because the killings did not occur in a vacuum. At the moment when his mind and heart told him to stand shooting, Ahmad Dakamseh, the young Jordanian soldier who killed the Israeli girls, shot at Israelis — not at Jordanians, Western tourists, foreign workers or any of the many other targets he could have shot at. Whether his mental condition is crazed or not, the fact is that he acted within a crazed political environment — the same crazed environment that prompted the Israeli Baruch Goldstein several years ago to kill dozens of Palestinian Muslims praying in a mosque in Hebron. We, too, now have our own Baruch Goldstein.

The attempt to isolate the criminal acts of crazed individuals from the wider political and emotional environment in which

they live is naïve and counter-productive, whether this is done in Israel, Jordan, Palestine or anywhere else. Along with the universal nature of Israeli national and personal grief is the equally universal phenomenon of a Baruch Goldstein. For every flawed, lone Jew who kills Palestinians there is a flawed, lone Arab who kills innocent Israelis, whether an Egyptian policeman, a Jordanian soldier or any other Arab. Given the recurring nature of this phenomena, we must face the tough question: Are such people born crazy, or are they made crazy by the personal fears and national torments of their life experiences?

The cycle of death and madness has come full circle: the book of the crazed killers has been opened and closed. The symmetry is hauntingly compelling, but in a cruel, painful and utterly wasteful manner. The Jewish Israeli Baruch Goldstein killed Palestinian Muslims kneeling down in prayer to the God they both shared, in a sanctuary for their common prophet and patriarch Abraham. The Jordanian Muslim Ahmad Dakamseh killed young Israeli schoolgirls picnicking on a plot of land in the Jordan Valley — give us a sign, dear God, did Abraham himself walk on that very piece of earth during his travels long ago? — a plot of land that is supposed to symbolise life and hope, not death and fear. We could not dare to portray more powerful symbols of our shared humanity than praying men and preny young schoolgirls: one seeks moral lessons and righteousness from God, the other seeks enlightenment and truth from books, teachers and field trips to zones of safety and reconciliation.

These symbols of life were shattered and forever silenced, however, by the blazing guns of unstable and angry men. More painful are the parallel facts: Baruch Goldstein's grave is a pilgrimage site for some Israelis, and Ahmad Dakamseh's act this week elicited a silent sense of inevitability from some Jordanians.

Without exception, every single Jordanian and Arab I spoke to in the past few days expressed genuine sadness, shock and even anger at the killing of the Israeli schoolgirls in Baqura — but every single person also mentioned that such regrettable acts are no surprise in view of Israeli policies and the many Israeli killings of innocent Arabs in Palestine, Lebanon and other crazed places. The personal, it seems, remains hostage to the political in this tortured land.

King Hussein's condolence visit to Israel on Sunday, like the deaths that prompted it, was also a twin expression of the per-

sonal and the political: as such, it elicited much praise along with some questions in Jordan. King Hussein acted as a leader who has chosen the option of peace as a strategic long-term trajectory for his country and people; peace as a strategic national policy demands the affirmation of humanity over ideology, of the personal over the political.

Those in Jordan and elsewhere in the Arab World who ask why Israeli leaders have never made such personal journeys of condolences to the Arab villages of Arab victims raise important questions about the principal moral and political imbalance that continues to anger ordinary Jordanians, Palestinians and other Arabs: Why does the loss of innocent, civilian Israeli life elicit such powerful expressions of personal and political compassion from Arab leaders and American presidents, while the parallel loss of innocent, civilian Arab life only elicits suggestions that we remain calm, control ourselves and explore how we can advance the peace process by addressing Israeli security needs?

The immense humanity and political acumen of King Hussein in visiting Israel to offer his condolences is a source of pride for most Jordanians; but it also highlights for most Jordanians the lack of reciprocal compassionate gestures by the Israeli leadership. In the same room and moment in Jerusalem this week when King Hussein expressed his sincere grief to the people of Israel at their loss, Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu confirmed tersely that the bulldozers would start work this week on the new construction on Jabal Abu Ghneim/Har Homa near Jerusalem. We share the grief of Israelis. But what do they share of ours? Do they even see us?

These are the questions and sentiments that ordinary Arabs ask this week. They are difficult, often awkward and uncomfortable questions and sentiments; but they are real, not manufactured; and they are getting more numerous and stronger by the day. This is the imbalanced emotional and political landscape in which unbalanced Israelis and Arabs shoot praying men and picnicking schoolgirls.

Having closed this ugly circle of fear, vulnerability and death, we now have to find the means to leave it for good — to quit forever this tormented landscape of frightened peoples, predatory states, zealous ideologies, angry religions and individuals who become mad and violent because they crack under the weight of the bigger violence and the older madnesses that define their societies.

## For 'peace in Mideast to have a chance, it must start from within the heart and soul of each Jew'

By Mohammed Azoka

A COMPLETE century has elapsed since the first Zionist conference was held in Basle-Switzerland. During these last hundred years — which were the most eventful, fierce, tumultuous and turbulent in the history of mankind — humanity enjoyed the automobile, the telephone, the aeroplane, the television, the computer, even ventured into outer space. The lives of millions of people were saved when penicillin was invented and those of million others wasted in the two world wars with their "advanced" killing devices. In this span of time, humanity invented the atomic bomb and fell prey to its horror, saw the birth and collapse of Communism as a universal dream and witnessed great advances in literature, art and sports. And it saw the establishment of the state of Israel.

Zionism, the major force behind this accomplishment, was never far behind in influencing, causing or helping bring about many of these events. Zionism exploits during World War I, like offering vast amounts of badly needed money to the beleaguered British government, secured the infamous Balfour Declaration.

Later, cooperation with Nazi Germany made sure the right numbers and quality of people necessary to start a nation were forced out of Germany and German-occupied European countries in the direction of Palestine through a perfectly staged "holocaust" that culminated in the proclamation of the state of Israel only three years after the guns fell silent in 1948.

Within hour of the declaration of Israel's birth, both the United States and the Soviet Union recognised it as a sovereign state. Britain, the mandatory occupying force in Palestine, had miraculously pulled out.

The new-born state did not waste any time in strengthening its armed forces far beyond the requirements of its own security; Israel even went on to build a nuclear reactor and research facilities, way back in 1960, fully aware that the Arab states were awoken away from possessing nuclear capability. Today, it is common knowledge that Israel owns two hundred nuclear warheads, complete with delivery rockets and planes poised at all Arab — and some Islamic — capitals and military targets.

Eventually, Israel fought four wars against the Arabs, three of which it staged, prepared, executed, blamed the

Arabs for causing and won.

The fourth war was stopped by the U.S., apparently to prepare the grounds for what ensued, which was turning Egypt, the largest Arab military power, away from the Soviet armoury and supplying it with American aircraft and armour, thus making sure Egyptians never acquire enough weapons to threaten Israel.

Through a complicated system of infiltration, espionage, intimidation, Western help, successful propaganda, Arab inaction and lack of enthusiasm, Israel was able to neutralise the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) as a fighting machine.

Later, the U.S., as part of its endeavours to control Arab oil, gave Israel the greatest prize when it engaged Saddam Hussein into a war and destroyed his army and his industrial capabilities, thus ridding Israel of its only remaining threat to speak of. All this paved the road for Israeli supremacy in the area, coupled with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and total Arab disarray which the West achieved by systematically destroying parliamentary democracies it had established during the twenties and thirties of this century, replacing them with "immortal, historical, one and only" genius and necessity leaders who broke the

soul of the entire Arab Nation with unprecedented tyranny, making it easy for the rulers to accept peace with the aggressor. Five decades after inception, Israel finds itself in an ideal situation: militarily supreme, economically secure and prospering, backed politically without hesitation by the only superpower in the world. Under such circumstances, it is logical to assume that the average Israeli citizen would feel safe enough to accept peace, even embrace it, for it is the first time in two millennia that Jews have "a home, a haven" in which no enemy can threaten him.

Yet, in the first national elections to choose a new prime minister, the Israeli majority chose Benyamin Netanyahu! Incredible? only at first glance. A deep look into the Jewish mind reveals the reasons behind the Israeli choice of non-peace. Reasons are very far-reaching and date back to the early days of Judaism, when Jews declared they were "God's chosen people." This declaration immediately set them apart from all else and forced non-Jews to regard them with suspicion, mistrust and, eventually, hatred.

During medieval times, the

nobility amassed great fortunes through the feudal system, but could not invest or manage their wealth directly since the all-powerful Catholic Church looked upon banking as "usury", so the Lords entrusted Jews with their money; Jews eventually grew rich, but were set apart in the eyes of the population.

The ensuing publication of the "Protocols of Zion's Sages" did not help the Jewish image. On the contrary, Jews were exposed as evil, cunning and vain people who looked down on "Gentiles", even considering the killing of one single Jew as equivalent to murdering the whole of God's creation.

This, of course, happened in Europe and had no connection with the lot of Jews in the Islamic World where they enjoyed full citizenship and exercised their activities in total freedom. In Europe, as popular feelings grew in animosity towards Jews, they became more secretive, even fearful, and developed their increasingly segregated societies, even lived in ghettos, which helped the emergence of Zionism as a protector of the Jewish people and, later, evolved into the dream — or plan — of return to Jerusalem, from which they were driven out by Nebuchadnezzar two thousand years ago.

The Zionist movement did not help assuage Jewish fears; on the contrary, it exploited these fears in order to convince Jewry that their salvation lies solely in securing a state of their own.

Zionism then infiltrated all major political movements throughout Europe and America, driven by two ideals: to know what is going on in the minds and hearts of Gentiles and try to influence such ideas to their benefit, to convince Gentiles that Jews are part of the mainstream of the population, and thus gain acceptance.

In both cases Zionism was defending historical fears and doubts in the intentions of others, but Zionist intervention always culminated in derailing these movements or at least influencing them. It did not matter if these movements conflicted, both in principle and in practice. This explains why prosperous Jews travelled first class in the trains of wartime Nazi Germany, slipping champagne in restaurant wagons, their women clad in silk and fur, and adorned with diamonds, while their brethren were supposedly being melted and turned into soap bars. Across the borders, the second row of influential positions in Stalin's ministry of propaganda was

exclusively manned by Jews.

The most vivid example was Communism, starting with Karl Marx, Lenin and score of other intellectuals and leaders: Jews actually laid the foundation, helped steer Communism through the years, thinking it may offer a way out of their materialistic swamp in the eyes of Gentiles. Then, when Communism had served its purposes, Zionism turned to help the U.S. bring it down: ostensibly through its failure to keep up in the star war race, but in reality due to its own shortcomings.

Many non-Zionist Jews actually opposed the idea of Israel and advocated peaceful coexistence with others, but their calls went unheeded, due to the strength of embedded old fears.

Israel citizens today still harbour fears of their Arab neighbours, which explains the heavy-handedness with which Israel security forces deal with Palestinian prisoners, Israeli exaggerated reactions towards any security-related incident and the overkill in retaliation to any border skirmish.

Those and many other acts are aimed at instilling some feeling of safety in the hearts of Jewish citizens, they seem to say "the army is here, doing its job perfectly, killing lots of Arabs," more than being aimed at intimidating Arabs.

Other aspects of insecurity are: maintaining the state of belligerence between Jews and Arabs by refusing peace overtures, stalling in pulling out of Arab territories occupied in 1967, delaying normalisation of relations, not implementing economic agreements duly signed with Arab countries with which they signed peace treaties because such steps must be followed by letting down Israeli defences by a fraction, which is taboo.

Today, peace has a unique opportunity. The Arabs have shed fears and doubts, they have even forgiven Israel for confiscating two thirds of Palestine, which is the limit of their people's endurance; neither Jews nor anybody else should ask them for more, since further demands will breed extremism.

If peace in the Middle East is to have a chance, it must start from within the heart and soul of each Jew, in Israel and the diaspora, not across the negotiating table.

The writer, a businessman, is the author of three novels in Arabic. He contributed the above article to the Jordan Times.

## LETTERS

## Gordian knot

The letter below was received datelined Amman, but unsigned. We take exception in publishing it for a self-evident reason: the anonymous writer must have thought it imperative to keep his identity under wraps in order to be able to convey his true feelings.

To the Editor:

INSTEAD OF bemoaning a sad reality, the question that should be asked is not when, but how, Jews will get over their obsession with the Holocaust.

Before I came to Jordan, I scoffed at Israel's well-known obsession with security, rejecting it as Holocaust paranoia or, worse, Holocaust manipulation. But when I first came here, all of the dark, distorted, irrational associations that had seeped into my consciousness growing up in Israel flooded my imagination.

In the shower, a faint memory of the gas chambers would flash through my mind and, along with it, also descriptions in Ha'aretz of Israeli torture methods using hot and cold water.

Walking down the streets, I would visualise masked youths gunning me down. At night, I would dream of hanging in the middle of a public square. I do not know why.

My point is that, unfortunately, this obsession is deeply ingrained in us, and those who do not doubt its validity, as I did, do not come here, or do not stay long enough to go beyond the initial shock.

Our memories, our darkest fears and our most harrowing sense of guilt and shame are intertwined in a tight and stubborn knot. Some of us have begun to untangle it. We need your help.

## For the children

To the Editor:

THE LATE discovery of the bad situation of our children in orphanages should direct our attention towards our children in general. They are, after all, our future. Jennifer Hamamah in her letter "Isn't it tiring?" (Jordan Times, Dec. 12, 1997) is very correct. Many of our children, and especially girls, are really abused by their parents. They are not allowed freedom or realisation of their potential. Moreover, they are not protected by our system.

The education system does not allow our children to explore ideas. It is based on memorisation, not comprehension. This is a very serious problem. If one surveys most of the school texts, one finds that the most common word is "state the reasons, conditions, etc...". The student should state them as memorised from the textbook. One will rarely find the words "discuss" or "what's your opinion." Creative writing is not existent. Very few students have ever written a term paper. This is because there are not many public libraries and the teachers themselves were not asked to do that. Moreover, if a school has a library it will not be open after hours, which sadly is 1 p.m. Saturdays through Wednesdays.

Teachers do not allow discussions. The student should follow what it is said to him or her. He/she cannot express his or her own opinion without fear of punishment, which is severe in many cases.

Our schools are crowded. They are cold in winter. They are old and in many cases not safe. I recall that Al Hussein College has three playgrounds that are built on three levels. And on each, a student can fall from as high as a metre if he were on the side. Generally the bathrooms and cafeterias are not hygienic. The food in the cafeterias is not up to any standard. There are very few public playgrounds. Schools close their doors after hours and even some principals make sure that no one can enter. This leaves our children in the streets and exposes them to many dangers. Many get injured or die in car accidents. There is no medical personnel in our schools.

Schools should remain open after hours and on weekends. The government is overemployed so we can afford to restructure and have some government employees work during these hours instead of not working at all during their working hours. We might want to train some of these employees to be nurses. There should be a library and a playground in each neighbourhood. We should have a nurse in every school. Let us set these goals and plan accordingly.

I do not blame the teachers. I blame myself and the whole society. I urge all friends of the children's cause to eagerly work on improving the situation of our children.

Osama Al Shaykh,  
 Berkeley, Ca.  
 U.S.



# Report addresses social issues, emphasises living conditions

NEW YORK — Two years after a groundbreaking United Nations summit meeting drew international attention to the growing dangers of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration, the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis (DESIPA) has prepared a far-reaching, meticulously detailed assessment of global social issues and policy options that will be among the documents before the upcoming session of the Commission for Social Development.

The study, the 1997 Report on the World Social Situation, is intended as a comprehensive analytical tool for policy makers, experts and citizens involved in developing strategies to implement the agreements reached at the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995). The summit, the first such global meeting to focus on social development issues, was attended by 117 heads of state and government, who approved a declaration and programme of action.

The report, which is issued every four years, consists of two major parts. Part I provides an overview of social issues, with an emphasis on living conditions. It starts with a presentation of economic patterns at the global and regional levels. It further appraises population trends both globally and regionally along with the demographic components of fertility, mortality and international migration that determine those trends.

The chapter on health notes that life expectancy has actually fallen in two groups of countries: sub-Saharan Africa and the countries in transition to market economies. Part I also provides an assessment of the global trends in hunger and malnutrition, and it elucidates policy approaches. It closes with a discussion on reducing gaps in education, including formal

education, adult illiteracy and the quality of education systems.

Part II of the report addresses the core themes of the 1995 Social Summit Programme of Action: eradication of poverty, expansion of productive employment and social integration. Each chapter discusses policy issues and options, domestic approaches and international instruments. The chapter on poverty examines major trends in absolute and relative poverty worldwide and its relationship to world economic growth. The chapter on employment and unemployment assesses the situation in developing, transitional and developed economies. The chapter on discrimination focuses on the structure and patterns of gender and minority discrimination.

The report builds on concepts developed at the social summit, including the notion "that economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development."

According to the report, the recent world economic performance is characterised by an annual growth rate of 2.5 per cent (1994-1996), a rate which is still lower than the average rate of the 1980s, because of the weakness of the economic recovery in developed economies. The current pattern of global economic strengthening reflects a broad-based expansion among countries, mostly among transition and developing economies, which have improved their competitiveness and exports due to reduced trade barriers, earlier stabilisation measures and structural adjustment efforts.

In addition, the report states, the continued strong international financial flows since the early 1990s have supplemented domestic resources of recipient countries. But, many developing countries remain severely

indebted, and current per capita income levels remain below those of 1980 in much of Africa, Latin America and west Asia. The economic recovery of developed economies exhibits modest growth, virtual stagnation of real wages and high levels of unemployment.

The report examines the size and growth of the world population, along with the demographic components of fertility, mortality and international migration. In the middle of 1996, world population stood at 5.77 billion people. Eighty per cent of the world's population, repre-

**"The enrolment in higher education more than doubled in the past 20 years, from 28 million students in 1970 to more than 60 million today. The number of literate adults has almost tripled, from approximately one billion in 1960 to more than 2.7 billion. However, despite enormous efforts to eradicate adult illiteracy, the absolute number of illiterate adults has increased from 877 million in 1980 to 885 million in 1995, the majority of which (872 million) live in developing countries."**

sented 4.59 billion persons, live in less developed regions, and 1.18 billion people live in more developed regions.

The study focuses on three aspects of the global health situation: the decline of life expectancy (particularly in Africa and the transition economies), the burden of ill health and the emergence of new infectious diseases. With respect to public health policies, the report assesses the costs of neglecting public health systems and suggests that global cooperation in public health be a priority. For instance, it points out that malnutrition, poor water supply, sanitation and hygiene are responsible for 30 per cent of the disease burden in developing countries. Incurable diseases that have emerged in addition to AIDS are drug-resistant malaria, tuberculosis and

1960 from an estimated 250 million children to more than one billion. The enrolment in higher education more than doubled in the past 20 years, from 28 million students in 1970 to more than 60 million today. The number of literate adults has almost tripled, from approximately one billion in 1960 to more than 2.7 billion. However, despite enormous efforts to eradicate adult illiteracy, the absolute number of illiterate adults has increased from 877 million in 1980 to 885 million in 1995, the majority of which (872 million) live in developing countries.

cholera. Attention is also drawn to the fact that the two largest risk factors in both the developed and transition economies are tobacco and alcohol.

People in virtually every country suffer from hunger and malnutrition, the report notes, but the extent and pattern differ substantially from country to country. Estimates demonstrate that the total number of undernourished in the developing world exceeds the total population of the developed world.

In its assessment of education, the report concludes that enrolment in primary and secondary schools has risen since

sub-Saharan Africa, China, east Asia and the Pacific.

The report shows region-by-region how world economic growth and social advance have taken place unevenly. In fact, the pattern of long-term growth has sharply marked contrasts in eradicating poverty in different parts of the world. For instance, the rapid growth rate in south and east Asia, combined with supportive macroeconomic and trade policies, has helped to diminish absolute poverty in these regions. But, there has been a large increase in poverty in low-income countries, especially in

economy.

On employment, the study notes that solving the problem of unemployment appears more difficult today than it did 50 years ago. Policy makers confront the difficulty of devising policies that address equity concerns while simultaneously preserving the structure of incentives needed to obtain efficient outcomes. The report describes in detail the structural changes in labour markets (in particular the segments of women and youth) and the employment situations and policies of developed, developing and transitional economies. Despite the reemergence of unemployment as a policy focus, the report concludes that the world economy is absorbing the bulk of a rapidly rising global labour force, which is better educated, possesses greater skills and is more mobile than ever before. As a result it proposes employment policies that conform with rapid changes in economic conditions.

Discussing discrimination and intolerance, the report analyses the anatomy and patterns of discrimination, in particular gender discrimination, and the situation of minorities. It shows how discriminatory practices are based on embedded social mechanisms or explicit public policies on the gender division of labour, political contexts, education, households and access to credit. It also discusses the effectiveness of several policies, and measures to combat discrimination, such as quotas, reverse discrimination, positive action or affirmative action, which institute preferences for members of certain disadvantaged groups. It notes, however, that those policies tend to increase disparities within minority groups and that policies which attack the underlying factors of discrimination and inequality may be more effective.

United Nations  
Information Services

## Randa Habib's corner

### Bracing for election promises

NOW THAT the countdown to the forthcoming elections has started, we are going to be blessed with numerous public statements by the legislative members, most of them propaganda-style.

And most likely, ministers/deputies are bound to distance themselves from all decisions taken by the government and that they deem unpopular or think that they could, eventually, backlash on their respective campaigns.

The promises will start flying again. And they are lucky because, after all, "pledge-donors" do not seem to be accountable to anybody: they can make the same, unfulfilled, promises they made four years ago without having to explain to anyone why their promises did not materialise in the past.

They will also, for reasons of their own, criticise whoever and whatever comes in the way of their reelection in a "war of defamations". Some have already started "shooting out".

In the meantime, would-be candidates, those who have never had the luck, yet, to sit under the dome, will most probably search for new ideas, and even new legislation, that could open up the doors of parliament for them.

In that context, for example, the idea of a women's quota in parliament is now appealing to many future candidates who see in it a possible chance to guarantee a seat in the House.

The only woman deputy Toujan Faisal voiced opposition to such a quota for "democratic reasons". She may be right. But then, how come we accept quotas for other minorities on racial or religious basis? And wasn't Mrs. Faisal herself elected via such a quota, winning a Circassian seat for Amman constituency?

Of course, what is right for some, is wrong for others, and everything seems to be rotating around personal interests.

## Pope Shenouda urges government to punish killers of Christians

CAIRO (Agencies) — In an unusually strong statement, Pope Shenouda III has called on the government to "strike with an iron fist" against extremists who are killing Egyptian Christians.

His statement came in an interview published Monday by the weekly Al Ushua newspaper and followed three attacks since Feb. 12 that took the lives of 21 Christians.

All of the incidents have been blamed on extremists who have waged a campaign of violence for five years to try to overthrow Egypt's secular government and replace it with strict Islamic rule.

Copts make up about 10 per cent of Egypt's 63 million people.

Pope Shenouda, head of the Coptic Church, told the paper that government security forces must do more to stop the attacks, which he described as "an attempt to undermine the country's security."

He described the attackers as "merciless" and added: "they (security forces) should strike with an iron fist on the bunch of hired sinners."

Suspected extremists last Thursday shot dead 13 people near the town of Nag Hamadi, 460 kilometres south of Cairo. Nine of the dead were Christians.

On Feb. 12, suspected extremists entered a church in the village of Al Fiqriya in Minya province, killing nine Copts. Two days later, the bodies of three Christian farmers were found in a field in Minya province, and the killings again were blamed on radicals. Minya is 220 kilometres south of Cairo.

The government has blamed Al Gamaa Al Islamiyah, which has been responsible for much of the violence in southern Egypt since the spring of 1992.

More than 1,070 people have died, most of them police and extremists in clashes in the south.

The Gamaa group said in a statement on Sunday that it was not involved in the Nag Hamadi attack or the killings in the church.

Extremists have attacked Christians in the past on grounds that they support the government and have served as informers for state security forces.

The extremists have robbed Christian pharmacies and jewelry stores to fund their activities and have, from time to time, killed Christian villagers. Police have rounded up for questioning more than 1,500 people after the latest massacres, security sources said.

### Group praises killing of Israeli girls

Another radical group on Monday praised last week's killing of seven Israeli schoolgirls by a Jordanian soldier and called on Muslims to wage a "holy war" to regain Jerusalem. The statement, faxed to the Associated Press, was signed by the Jihad Movement-Vanguards of Conquest.

The two groups are both believed to have small followings. The Vanguards are presumed to be offshoots of the Jihad group that murdered Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981, but little is known about the shadowy Jihad Movement.

The fax indicated that the groups have decided to operate together.

"The Islamic and Arab reactions should match the love of Jerusalem which resides in the hearts," the Jihad Movement-Vanguards of conquest said in its statement.

"The only path to regain the right (in Jerusalem) is the path of sacrifice, the path taken by the Jordanian soldier who emptied his machine gun into the breasts of the grandchildren of monkeys and pigs," it said.

It called on Muslims "to go strongly and steadfastly toward Jihad for God."

There was no way to independently verify the authenticity of the statement, but it followed the pattern of previous statements from the groups.

The Vanguards group was accused of a number of attacks in the early 1990s and the 1993 attempt on the life of then-Prime Minister Atef Sedki. But a government crackdown on its leadership has reduced its activity greatly.

The Jihad Movement, believed made up of radicals who have split from other groups, has called repeatedly for and end of the regime of President Hosni Mubarak and the establishment of an Islamic state.

A second statement signed by the Vanguards and Jihad on Monday called for unification of all radical groups to "pull the nation (Egypt) from the rule of the tyrants."

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Russian team in Iraq for economic talks

BAGHDAD (AP) — Russian Energy Minister Pyotr Rodionov said Monday his country is keen to boost oil and economic cooperation with Iraq. He made the remark after arriving in the Iraqi capital with an 80-member trade delegation that includes six deputy ministers and dozens of businessmen. "We are here to renew our cooperation ties and bring back the volume of trade to its pre-1990 level," he told reporters. Before the 1990-91 Gulf crisis, Russia was Baghdad's principal arms supplier and a major trading partner. It now is eager to renew economic links and recover Iraq's \$7 billion debt to Moscow. Mr. Rodionov said he and the delegation will have talks with top Iraqi officials on oil and trade cooperation. He did not give details. Russia's state-run oil company has said it plans to sign a \$3.8 billion deal with Iraq to develop a major Iraqi oil field once U.N. sanctions are lifted.

### Iran summons German ambassador over murder

TEHRAN (AP) — Iran summoned the German ambassador here after an Iranian woman was shot dead by her former husband in a Frankfurt courtroom. Iran's official IRNA news agency reported Monday. The Foreign Ministry called in Horst Baechmann on Sunday to express its "support for the rights of Iranian nationals living abroad," it said. The director general for consulate affairs, Mohammad Sadeq Fayaz, demanded an "explanation and quick investigation" into the matter. IRNA said, "Iran wants Germany to punish the murderer and defend the rights of Iranian citizens" in Germany, he said. A German policeman pulled out his service revolver in court and shot dead his former wife during a hearing Friday on a request for child support. The policeman, 39, fired 16 bullets at the woman of Iranian origin, Sedigheh Bahari, 33, died on the spot and her lawyer

received three bullets in the chest and was hospitalised. The Iranian had asked the court to make the policeman pay an allowance for the upkeep of her 18-month-old daughter.

### Iraqi deputy calls for PoW dialogue with Iran

BAGHDAD (AFP) — An Iraqi deputy proposed Monday that the Iraqi and Iranian parliaments open direct talks on a final settlement on prisoners of war (PoWs) in Iran. "We are ready to engage in dialogue with the Iranian parliament anywhere and without reservations to find a solution to this tragedy," Deputy Khaled Al Saidi, head of the Iraqi parliament's human rights committee, told AFP. He made the appeal ahead of an Iraqi prisoners of war solidarity week which begins Saturday.

### Chaldean church to hold May synod in Lebanon

BEIRUT (AFP) — Patriarch Raphael I Bidawid, head of the Iraq-based Roman Catholic Chaldean Church, said his community will hold a synod for the first time in Lebanon in May. Patriarch Bidawid and 17 Chaldean prelates will participate in the reception for Pope John Paul II during his two-day visit to Lebanon on May 10, he said after a meeting with Lebanese Foreign Minister Fares Bouez. The church has 1.25 million followers across several countries and is represented by 17 bishops. Patriarch Bidawid said, adding that there were four million Catholic Chaldeans in India who are not under his supervision. He said 90 per cent of the 800,000 Catholics living in Baghdad were members of the Chaldean Church. There are 10,000 Chaldeans in Lebanon. Lebanon has 18 religious communities of which largest Lebanese Christian groups are the Orthodox and Maronite Christians. Other Christian minorities, including the Chaldeans, are represented by one deputy in the 128-member parliament.

## Crown Prince briefs Arafat on King's talks with Netanyahu

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Netanyahu refused Jordanian and Palestinian appeals to back down on the Jerusalem settlement plan.

But after his talks with

King Hussein and a phone conversation with Mr. Arafat, talks were subsequently organised to arrange an Arafat-Netanyahu summit, possibly later this week.

King Hussein also

hopes to bring Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat to Amman for a three-way summit in about 10 days, Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy said on Monday.

## Police stop activists from visiting Dakamseh family in Ebder village

(Continued from page 11)

meeting on Sunday decided to launch a broad-based campaign to ensure that Dakamseh would have a fair and public trial.

The campaigners, who include professional unions and opposition deputies along with Laith Shbailat who heads the Jordan Engineers Union and is a leading critic of the government, said in a statement the soldier was "innocent until proven guilty."

Mr. Majilli said the meeting had asked the lawyers' union to form a defence team, to insist that it be present during Dakamseh's interrogation by a military tribunal, and to defend him in court.

King Hussein, who has condemned the shooting as a "vile crime," has appointed veteran security official Mohammad Keilani to head investigations into the soldier's motives.

In apparent sympathy with the soldier, the committee said Israel continued to occupy Arab land, confiscate Palestinian territory and evict its inhabitants, accusing the Jewish state of "killing and torturing hundreds of thousands of men, women and elderly since its creation in 1948."

Referring to King Hussein's conciliatory visit to Israel on Sunday to pay condolences to the families of the girls, the campaigners said "the shooting should be considered in its natural frame-

work and without blowing it out of proportion."

Some Jordanians privately criticised the King's visit as an excessive display which they fear Israel is exploiting to defuse Arab anger at Jewish settlement building.

The campaigners also said the site of the shooting in the Baqura area, which was made accessible to Israeli farmers under their 1994 peace treaty, was "still under occupation."

The campaigners, apparently reacting to the King's visit to Israel, decided to send their own delegation on Monday to pay respects to the family of the soldier Ebder in north Jordan.



# International organisations highlight benefits of micro-finance

## 'Micro and small-enterprises are clearly Jordan's best hope to provide jobs for rapidly growing labour force'

By Ghaila Alul  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A micro-finance conference which opened Monday served in on the need to reach out to a large number of low income groups and provide them with quality financial and business development services.

"Providing opportunities for sustainable micro-enterprises loans at reasonable market rates, and for safe and liquid savings, makes it possible for large numbers of those trapped in poverty to gain self-sufficiency through their own acts of self-reliance," director of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) mission in Jordan, Lewis Lucke, said in his speech to the opening ceremony of the conference.

The three-day conference sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the USAID, the World Bank and the European Union (EU), seeks to promote dia-

logue among micro-finance practitioners and donors with the aim of building a sustainable micro-finance practice in Jordan.

The conference, which brings together international as well as Jordanian experts, is also geared towards developing a framework of support for income-generating projects for the poor.

Mr. Lucke emphasised the importance of expanding micro-finance practice, or the practice of providing small loans to poor enterprises, in a sustainable manner in Jordan.

He said that those working in small businesses currently account for two-thirds of Jordan's labour force.

"Micro and small-enterprises are clearly Jordan's best hope to provide jobs for its rapidly growing labour force," he added.

In his speech to the conference, Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) Deputy Governor Michel Marto said the government has recently started developing small

enterprises within the framework of the "social safety net" which aims at preparing a comprehensive strategy to fight poverty and unemployment as well as increase productivity in the Kingdom.

For the same objective, several funds were established in Jordan, such as the Social Aid Fund, the National Development Fund and others, said Dr. Marto who was deputising for His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan.

Non-governmental local and international organisations in Jordan also play a vital role in supporting small enterprises. These organisations include the General Federation of Jordanian Women, Noor Al Hussein Foundation and the Queen Alia Fund. CARE International, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), Save the Children Fund and many others, Dr. Marto said.

He indicated that the government is currently studying a proposal by the



CBJ Deputy Governor Michel Marto (left) address the micro-finance conference which opened in Amman Monday in cooperation with UNDP, USAID, the World Bank and the EU (Petra photo)

International Finance Corporation (IFC) to establish a project for the financing of micro-enterprises in Jordan.

Calling on the government to assume a larger role in encouraging small enterprises, Dr. Marto said the government should grant the poor the opportunity to start such enterprises by simplifying and amending legislation and tax policies.

Dr. Marto urged donors to target "economically-active, low-income groups" provide direct financial support for local financial institutions and give support to institutions providing information to micro-enterprise owners.

The senior CBJ official recommended that programmes for financing small projects should aim at integrating and activating efforts by governmental and non-governmental organisations.

He also suggested that funding should target the least privileged, including women who should be granted the freedom to choose the projects they wish to carry out, said Mr. Marto.

Loan-related procedures should be simplified in order to reach the largest number of low income groups, he added.

Modern ways should also be adopted in dealing with poor beneficiaries, such as what Mr. Marto called "group lending."

### U.N. official cautions against 'cure-all' hopes

While recognising the advantages of micro-finance to low income groups, UNDP resident representative in Jordan, Jorgen Lissner, said "it is by no means a panacea."

"It is not a cure-all against poverty and unemployment. If we delude ourselves into believing that it is, if we fail to understand the limitations of micro-finance and the complexities of poverty, we will be guilty of a serious oversimplification, which can only lead to wrong diagnoses and hence to the wrong solutions," Mr. Lissner told participants.

Mr. Lissner stressed that micro-finance is not an instrument of charity nor is it a sole commercial act.

"It is not charity because loans have to be paid back and the costs of operating the scheme have to be recovered. And it is not commercialism, because standard rules on collateral are broken, and because usually the cash goes together with care and concern, often in the form of training and business advice," Mr. Lissner said.

He also warned against confusing between micro-finance clients, the "know-it-all" entrepreneurs and the

poor.

"There are distinct differences between the entrepreneurs who have skills and the ambition to create a micro-enterprise and what I call the survivors who are less ambitious and less skilled, and whose primary interest is to augment their household income," said Mr. Lissner.

Richard Rosenberg, senior advisor at the Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest (CGAP) Secretariat at the World Bank, reviewed factors that promoted the necessity for micro-finance practices in general.

He named them to be: 1- Poor borrowers can't or won't repay bank loans. 2- Poor people cannot be charged enough to cover

costs. 3- Private institutions and banks would not do micro-finance. 4- Commercial-cost money cannot finance micro-enterprises.

As such, Mr. Rosenberg told the Jordan times that in general, poor borrowers do repay their loans to micro-finance institutions more promptly than rich borrowers to banks.

He stressed that "most poor borrowers never fail to repay their loans because the next loan is dependent on the repayment of the first."

Mr. Lissner told participants that this conference aims to "explore in depth the lessons learnt so far and the best practices available to address the diverse needs of different categories of micro-finance clients."

## The story of Kifayah - the mother of six children

The following is a case study presented by Director of the USAID mission in Jordan, Lewis Lucke, at a micro-finance conference Monday.

The case concerned a Jordanian woman who is a client of Save the Children's Group Guaranteed Lending and Savings Programme (GLSL).

This programme has been supported by UNICEF, ODA, the Canada Fund, USAID and by the private Save the Children Fund.

Kifayah is a poor mother of six children (five of whom are under six years of age). Kifayah became a member of GLSL programme in 1994 with her first market rate loan of JD75 at an eight per cent flat interest rate.

Kifayah began her business of making inexpensive pillows, curtains and bed-covers selling them at a small profit to small shops in her area. She repaid her first loan in 18 weeks and then took out another slightly larger loan.

Now, Kifayah is in her seventh loan cycle, and has repaid all her loans on time. Since 1994, she has borrowed and repaid almost JD1,550.

She recently told an interviewer: "I'm near to realising my dream of my own shop in the very near future. I'm also saving for our children's education, and I'm learning a great deal through GLSL on all aspects of life."

She added "I was the treasurer of my GLSL group and they taught me how to calculate income and deposits. I also learned that I can save money no matter how hard things are. I've also learned from the group about what to do when one of my small children is hurt or sick. I'm learning how to better raise my children."

Mr. Lucke said that this woman's story is one of strength and self-reliance, of new hope for a woman and her family.

"The positive outcome relies upon Kifayah's strength and abilities, but it also relies upon the economic progress made possible for a poor micro-entrepreneur and her family by a well-designed, sustainable programme of micro-credit and savings."

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NG	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.8389	0.8297	1.4555	123.70	1.3688	1693.50	1.3005	5.8983
DE Mark	0.5481	1.0000	0.3724	0.6420	73.20	0.8102	1002.45	1.1251	3.3740
GB Sterling	1.2446	2.6850	1.0000	2.3118	196.46	2.1733	2691.47	3.0195	9.0581
CH Franc	0.6870	1.1584	0.4314	1.0000	84.81	0.9286	1182.71	130.46	3.4120
JP Yen	0.0081	1.3648	0.5083	1.1761	1.0000	1.1059	13.58	153.57	4.6050
CA Dollar	0.7367	1.2250	0.3922	1.0289	1.11	1.0000	1238.36	1.3867	4.1637
IT Lira	0.0006	0.9984	0.3713	0.6859	1371.37	0.8075	1.0000	11.21	3.3823
NL Guilder	0.3782	0.6884	0.3311	0.5802	76.30	0.5109	661.44	1.0000	2.9390
FR Franc	0.1755	0.2963	0.1104	0.1942	21.68	0.2401	33.34	33.3400	1.0000

Energy				
Oil	Last	Previous		
Brent	19.45	19.50		
W. Texas	21.20	21.25		
Bony	19.45	19.50		
Dubai	18.21	18.28		
U.L. Gas	202.00	201.00		

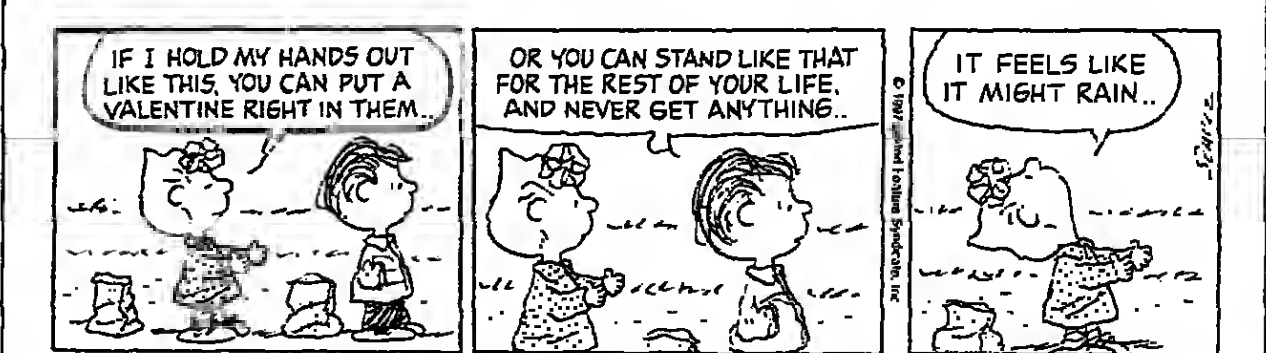
Mid-East Currencies				
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF
SA Riyal	0.2668	0.4805	0.1678	0.3842
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.48013	0.17141	0.39864
KW Dinar	3.2941	5.56793	2.07383	4.79840
BH Dinar	0.3770	0.68229	0.24091	0.53258
CY Pound	1.9677	3.3239	1.2343	2.8641

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)				
Period	-1-	-3-	-6-	-9-
Cny	Month	Months	Months	Year
USD	5.36	5.48	5.64	5.84
GBP	5.38	5.54	5.71	5.91
JPY	0.32	0.36	0.43	0.56
DEM	3.08	3.19	3.30	3.42
FRF	3.23	3.27	3.35	3.41
CHF	1.84	1.78	1.78	1.75
ITL	7.37	7.37	7.30	7.28

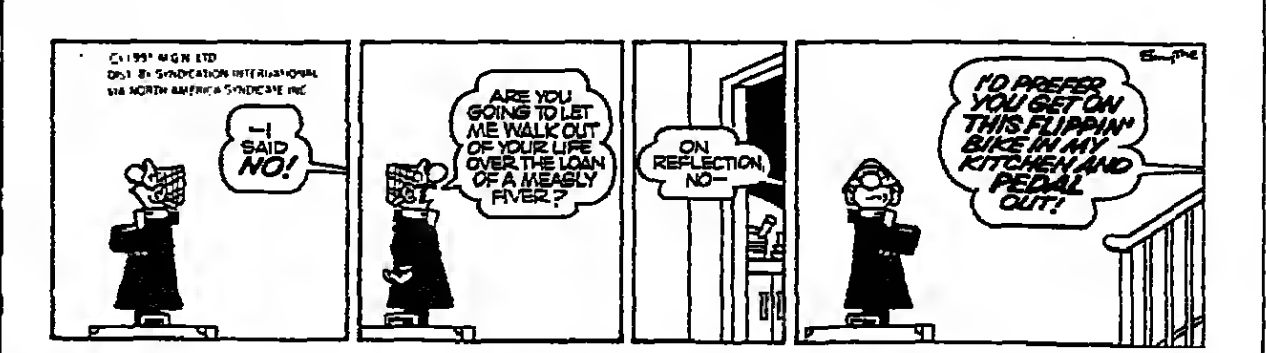
Main Equity Indices				
Bourse	Index	Value	% Chg	High
New York	DOW JONES	6908.65	-26.51	6935.84
New York	S&P 500	789.01	-4.14	792.47
London	FT-SE 100	4380.2	-4.41	4408.1
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	19853.6	-129.86	19984.1
Paris	CAC 40	2598.72	-46.9	2633.74
Frankfurt	DAX	3350.86	-8.3	3374.83

JOD Cross Rates				
Currency	Buy	Sell		
US Dollar	0.708	0.710		
GB Sterling	1.1315	1.1373		
DE Mark	0.4171	0.4192		
CH Franc	0.6853	0.6877		
FR Franc	0.1237	0.1243		
JP Yen	0.0071	0.0072		
NL Guilder	0.3708	0.3721		
IT Lira	0.4186	0.4207		

### Peanuts



### Andy Capp



### Mutt'n'Jeff



### HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, MARCH 18, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson,  
Astrologer, Carroll  
Richter Foundation

**ARIES:** (March 21 to April 19) Contact your fellow associates today and discuss how you can best gain your mutual goals. You can make some fine progress in business in the days ahead if you apply the advice of a knowledgeable person.

**TAURUS:** (April 20 to May 20) You can make quick progress today if you get the assistance of those who are experts in your line of endeavor. Use your organizational skills later this evening to make your career activities much more beneficial.

**GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 21) Get together with close friends for a recreational activity early today. Show more devotion for your loved ones and he or she will return the affection. Be sure to drive carefully while on the highway and avoid difficulties.

**MOON CHILDREN:** (June 22 to July 21) Whatever you do to improve your dwelling today can yield fine results. Entertain at home later this evening with fellow associates and close friends, and be a charming host so that everyone will feel comfortable.

**LEO:** (July 22 to August 21) You can make some fine new contacts today if you visit friends and discuss any business activities. Be sure to dress very carefully, and you will make a great impression upon those in authority who can make successful.

**VIRGO:** (August 22 to September 22) Be open and honest in any business dealing. Seek advice today from a financial expert and become more successful and secure. Later this evening you can seek out fellow associates, and finish up any business activities.

**LIBRA:** (September 23 to October 22) Be charming and thoughtful to everyone you contact today, and become a more popular person. Be very careful while driving on the highway and visit close friends. Later this evening you can meet with knowledgeable people.

**SCORPIO:** (October 23 to November 21) This is a fine day today to do something thoughtful for your mate which he or she will appreciate. You can also get the information you need about a new contact in your business activities and thereby be successful.

**SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) You can gain your wishes more easily today with the assistance of good friends, so let them know you appreciate the help. Be concise in conversation with bigwigs and thereby make a good impression upon them for your success.

**CAPRICORN:** (December 22 to January 20) Make sure you handle credit and civic matter with precision and thereby you won't make any errors. Show more affection for your mate today, and improve your home situation in ways you could never suspect.

**AQUARIUS:** (January 21 to February 19) If you make any changes today, use your artistic talents for best results. If you must plan a trip, watch the costs and travel light so you won't be short of funds when the need arises in case of emergency.

**PISCES:** (February 20 to March 20) A talk with a business expert today can reveal some ways to increase your abundance for a rainy day. Your mate can make your free hours much happier, so spend as much time as possible and you can both be happy.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper



# Palestinian trade fair sets stage for campaign to boost exports

DUBAI (AFP) — Palestinians opened their first trade fair on Sunday in Dubai, the Middle East hub they want to use as a launchpad to sell goods to the Gulf and Asia in a bid to boost exports to \$1 billion a year by 2000.

"Dubai is a vital passage to develop our industrial and agricultural exports, of which 65 per cent are currently absorbed by the Israeli market," said senior Palestinian National Authority official Saeb Bameh.

The exposition, a first for the Palestinians, is aimed at accessing the vast Gulf market and attracting potential investors.

Seventy small enterprises, mainly funded from within the autonomous Palestinian territories, are showcasing a range of goods from food to textiles, pharmaceutical products and cosmetics, marble and construction materials.

Dubai Chamber of Commerce Director General Abdul Rahman Moutiwai said the emirate, dubbed the Hong Kong of the Middle East, would provide facilities for Palestinian producers, but be added a note of caution.

"They must take account of the stiff competition because Dubai is a trade centre open to all the world's products," he said.

Dubai is the region's main centre for reexports to Hong Kong, India, Iran, Kuwait, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Singapore.

Mr. Bameh said the Palestinians had already learnt from their experience competing against Israeli production which dominated the Palestinian market.

"Our economy is young but it is capable of rising to the challenge of competition," he said.

"If we succeed in Dubai, we can assert ourselves in all the world markets," he said, adding that accords have been signed with the United States, European Union and some nations of the former Soviet Union for

the acquisition of Palestinian goods.

Palestinian industry ministry official Jawad Harzalah said Palestinian exports are currently \$350 million a year and were targeted to reach \$1 billion by 2000.

Palestinian industries have had to contend with numerous blockades imposed by Israel around the autonomous territories, with closures stepped up since a wave of anti-Israeli suicide bombings a year ago.

"That could pose a problem if Palestinian producers are not able to honour their contracts" because of the closures, said Mr. Moutiwai.

Between May 1994 and May 1996, the Palestinian National Authority counted 275 closure days, resulting in losses estimated by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat at between \$6 and \$7 million.

A seminar on investments in the self-rule territories is being held on the sidelines of the fair.

Palestinian Trade and Economy Minister Maher Al-Masri and his advisors will be informing local businesses and the 80,000-strong Palestinian diaspora in the United Arab Emirates about opportunities for partnership projects in the territories.

# Borrowings on international capital markets hit record in 1996

PARIS (AFP) — Borrowings on the international capital markets rose by 22 per cent last year to a new record high, the OECD said in its quarterly report on financial market trends released Sunday.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) added that the fourth quarter last year was particularly active on the bond market due to a marked decline of long rates.

Altogether, international borrowings hit \$1.57 trillion last year against \$1.28 trillion in 1995, the report said. That includes issues of bonds and shares, syndicated loans, commercial paper and other borrowing facilities.

Bond issues alone last year hit a record \$711 billion, up a hefty 52 per cent from the previous year.

The report noted that due to lower yields on reference issues within the OECD area, investors turned more to emerging markets, on which borrowings are remunerated more highly. That demand stimulated activity, especially toward the end of the year, and bond issues from South America, South East Asia and central and eastern Europe more than doubled from the previous year to \$55 billion.

Another 1996 feature is that issues in currencies other than the "big three" — the dollar, the mark and the yen — increased markedly. Borrowings in sterling

doubled to 33 billion pounds, and those in French francs more than tripled to 235 billion francs.

Share issues were up by 41 per cent to \$58 billion, but syndicated loans slipped by seven per cent to \$343 billion.

# Kuwait Airways loses \$100m

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — National flag carrier Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) recorded losses of more than \$100 million in the financial year 1995/1996, KAC's chairman has said.

Ahmad Al-Mishari told the Kuwaiti daily Al-Anba that losses in the financial year ending June 30, 1996, were \$5 million dollars (\$115 million), compared with losses of 27.9 million dollars (\$92 million) reported 12 months earlier.

He said the losses were mainly a result of the ongoing programme to rebuild the KAC fleet and facilities that were destroyed during the Iraqi invasion between 1990-1991.

"The losses caused by the invasion and the real costs since the liberation are not yet clear, and are being discovered one after another with every step of reconstruction," the chairman said.

He said that rebuilding included repayments on loans for new planes that will create a modern fleet of 17 aircraft by 1998.

In December, KAC agreed a loan worth \$113 million with the American Institution Nations Bank to part finance two new Boeing 777-200 on order from the U.S. manufacturer.

The new Boeings, which will cost a total of \$280 million by delivery, will join KAC's fleet of 15 Airbus in February and June 1998.

Mr. Mishari said plans to privatise the wholly-owned KAC subsidiary, Kuwait Aviation Services Company (KASCO), were now awaiting the go-ahead from the finance ministry, which had yet to set a timetable.

KAC "has not hesitated at all in carrying out all the necessary measures for privatising KASCO," Mr. Mishari said.

Mr. Mishari said last year, that he hoped the sale of the aviation caterer KASCO would help put KAC back in the black for the financial year 1995/1996.

## Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

## Anani sees Gaza City the ideal free zone in the whole region

**\*\* FORMER MINISTER OF labour, industry and trade and information Jawad Anani said recently in a lecture that he favours transforming the Aqaba region into a free zone but he ruled out any feasibility from transforming the whole of the Kingdom into a free zone.** Dr. Anani, a well known economist and analyst, explained that Aqaba enjoys all the elements to be a free zone as it's seaside location and proximity to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Israel and Africa's east coast makes it an ideal site. "Aqaba has the right qualifications for tourism and cargo in addition to being well organised," he asserted.

Dr. Anani, however, predicted that the city of Gaza would be the ideal free zone in the whole region.

The lecturer covered in his speech many economic areas as he spoke about the construction sector, labour problems, cash liquidity, exports and investment.

He predicted that the prices of building materials will remain low this year because there is not much building activity going on these days. Similarly, prices of furniture will also remain low, he said. Looking further ahead, Dr. Anani saw a clear recovery and growth in the construction business, and consequently, the possibility of prices going up by as high as 20 per cent, especially because such a recovery will be coming after a period of sluggishness.

Dr. Anani stressed the importance of setting up large investment projects to absorb labour and reduce unemployment. Describing the labour market in Jordan as "very puzzling," the analyst pointed out

that out of a million Jordanian workforce, the public sector (civil and military) employs between 45 per cent and 50 per cent of the total whereas much of those working in the private sector were "guest or foreign labour".

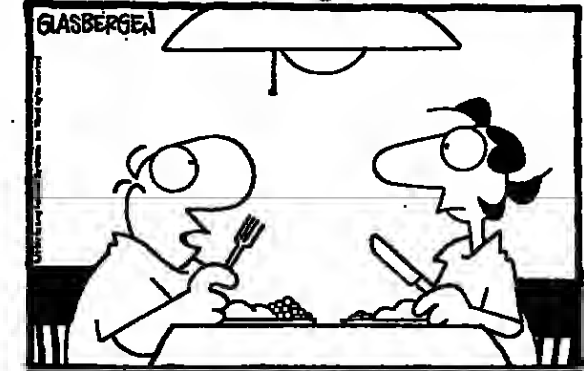
The former minister called for retraining the unemployed on new vocations and crafts because "we are in need to professionalise many of the businesses we have lost in Jordan," noting that surgical measures are to begin in reducing the public sector workforce.

Dr. Anani did not expect a breakthrough on the liquidity issue and the interest rates problem and, as such, he said the government should solve the financial situation of new investors especially the individuals and owners of labour-intensive enterprises.

He saw the possibility of an economic recovery through the opening of new export markets of Jordanian products and services, especially in North African countries, and through higher levels of dealings with Iraq and the Arab Gulf states. "The opportunity could arise to boost trade with the Palestinian market," he said. He also expected higher local and foreign investments, but within limits, despite the legislations that will encourage investments. He indicated that Jordan will witness "a wide activity in terms of investment return (income)".

Economist Anani concluded by pointing out that Jordan's main challenge in 1997 will be the savings-investments link to keep the economic cycle rolling. He said this is possible if some "outside liquidity" is provided (Al Ra'i + Al Dustour).

## THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



## JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

PHAMC  
STRYT  
RELPE  
YELGA

Answer here: ON A

Saturday's Jumbles: LOUSE TEASE LIKELY GEMENT  
Answer: What car phone users can become - CELL-MATES

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EXT. 42



## Australia's Capobianco found guilty, banned until 2000

MONTE CARLO (R) — Australian sprinter Dean Capobianco committed a doping offence and has been suspended until May 2000, the International Amateur Athletic Federation said Monday.

It said the IAAF arbitration panel meeting in Monte Carlo over the weekend decided that Capobianco was guilty of doping after testing positive for the banned substance stanozolol at an athletics meeting in Hengelo, Netherlands, last May.

The IAAF said in a statement: "Following laboratory analysis in Cologne (in June), Capobianco's (urine) sample was found to contain metabolites of stanozolol and, accord-

ing to IAAF rules, he will be suspended until May 27, 2000. "As a consequence of this judgement, all results obtained by Capobianco after May 27, 1996 are declared invalid."

Capobianco, 26, was allowed to compete at the Olympic Games in Atlanta last August after appealing against the positive dope test from the May 27 Hengelo Grand Prix, claiming it could have been caused by eating contaminated meat.

The meeting of the arbitration panel was postponed twice earlier this year as first the IAAF arbitration panel and then Capobianco's lawyers asked for more time to prepare their cases.

## 'Becker leaves Germany for U.S. home'

MUNICH (R) — German media reported that Boris Becker was leaving Germany for good on Monday, flying to the United States to move into a luxury home there.

A spokesman at Frankfurt airport confirmed Becker was on his way to Miami and that his wife Barbara, 31, and son Noah, 3, had already left on Saturday on one-way tickets to Florida.

Becker's lawyer was not immediately available for comment on whether the move was permanent.

The triple Wimbledon champion said late last year he wanted to move to the United States in about three years' time. But after tax investigators raided his Munich house in December in his absence, an angry Becker warned he could leave sooner.

The mass-circulation daily Bild, one of several media to carry the story, headed its front-page report "Boris's bitter farewell."

It said Becker had put his car up for sale, that Noah's room in their villa was empty and that the family had spent a farewell evening with Becker's parents.

Becker said last year he wanted to move to the United States when his son Noah started school, so that the boy would avoid the pressures in Germany of having a famous father and of not being white.

Becker said he and his wife, who is collyred, believed their son would be able to lead a more normal life in a multi-racial society.

A number of high-income German sports figures have moved abroad in order to avoid high taxes. Becker returned to Germany in 1993 after living in Monaco for three years.

Steffi Graf was a prominent exception to the exodus but has run into severe trouble with authorities who are still investigating her on suspicion of evading taxes.

Her father Peter was convicted of tax evasion in January and sentenced to almost four years in jail.

## U.S. beat Canada in World Cup qualifier

PALO ALTO, California (R) — The Americans found their scoring touch Sunday, beating Canada 3-0 in a CONCACAF regional group World Cup qualifying match.

The win gave the United States four points from two matches, level with Mexico, who were held to a goalless draw in Costa Rica earlier on Sunday.

Three of the six teams in the Central and North America and Caribbean group will advance to the World Cup finals next year in France.

"I feel like we are slowly making progress," said U.S. coach Steve Sampson, whose team failed to score in its first qualifying match, a 0-0 tie with Jamaica.

"At times our play was very good and other times it was inconsistent, but we got three points," he said after the game at Stanford University stadium.

Canadian coach Bob Lenarduzzi was frank. "We didn't compete for most of the first half, and that was no good, especially after we were hammered 4-0 two weeks ago (in Mexico)."

For the Canadians, who were seeking a measure of revenge against their giant neighbours for winning the ice hockey World Cup six months ago, it was a frustrating afternoon.



Ukrainian Tatiana Popova jumps with a hoop as she performs a routine during the international RSG Deryugina Cup in Kiev, March 16. Gymnasts from 12 countries took part in the tournament (Reuters photo)

## UEFA stage set for Asprilla

PARIS (AFP) — Newcastle's erratic Colombian striker Faustino Asprilla gave notice to UEFA Cup opponents Monaco that he is in ominous form after a superb display in their 4-0 Premiership win over Coventry at the weekend.

Asprilla, who scored against Metz in the previous round, has been out of the frame when England duo Alan Shearer and Les Ferdinand have been fit, but with them both currently sidelined by injuries he is revelling in the spotlight.

And Newcastle will need his talents in Tuesday's game to make up the 1-0 deficit from the first leg at St. James' Park.

The Colombian conjured

up his full array of mesmeric skills to torment Coventry and supply the spark of inspiration that enabled Newcastle to end a run of three successive defeats.

Asprilla, whose right ankle was hurt by Dion Dublin's tackle, departed on a stretcher to a rapturous send-off from the toon army, raising fears that he might be joining Shearer and Ferdinand on the sidelines.

But Newcastle boss Kenny Dalglish revealed afterwards that the injury was not as bad as it had looked and that Asprilla had indicated he would be fit to face Monaco in Tuesday night's UEFA Cup quarter-final second leg.

The runaway French League leaders are in the driving seat, after securing a 1-

0 first-leg lead at St. James' Park when Shearer, Ferdinand and Asprilla were all missing.

But Asprilla, who was suspended for the home leg, has been Newcastle's UEFA Cup specialist with five goals in the five ties he has played in, and his return is a welcome boost.

Meanwhile Inter Milan had a tough warm up for their home fixture against Anderlecht, which stands at 1-1 following the first leg.

They lost 1-0 at Parma on Saturday after Enrico Chiesa's 22nd minute strike from deep inside the area.

Denmark's Brondby, who thrashed Karlsruhe in the previous round, were the revelations of the first leg by winning 1-0 in Tenerife and already have one foot in the semi-finals.

Valencia, who beat defending champions Bayern Munich in the first round, entertain another German side in Schalke 04 but have a 2-0 deficit from the first leg to make up — however, with their recent Argentinian signing Ariel Ortega fully acclimatised the Spanish side could well make home advantage tell.



Overall World Cup season champions Pernilla Wiberg of Sweden (L) and Luc Alphand of France (R) pose with their trophies on the awards stand in Vail. Wiberg is the first woman from Sweden to win the overall title. Alphand is the first Frenchman to win the title since Jean-Claude Killy won 29 years ago (Reuters photo)

## Alphand, Wiberg win overall World Cup titles

VAIL, Colorado (AFP) — Frenchman Luc Alphand won the overall World Cup title on Sunday and Pernilla Wiberg of Sweden, already women's overall winner, enjoyed a further victory in her superb season.

Alphand became the first downhill specialist since Karl Schranz of Austria in 1970 to take the title when Norwegian Kjetil Andre Aamodt failed to finish in the top two in Sunday's final World Cup slalom.

And Wiberg earned a rare joint first spot with Italy's Lara Magoni as they both clocked 1min 35.77sec in the slalom ahead of Germany's Katja Seizinger.

Finn Christian Jagge of Norway won the final men's slalom of the season, head of Austria's Thomas Stangassinger and Italy's Alberto Tomba.

But most eyes, including those of Alphand who was watching in Vail, were trained on Aamodt but he could only finish seventh.

Seventh was not enough so Alphand became the first Frenchman to win since Jean-Claude Killy in 1968, succeeding Norway's 1996 overall champion Lasse Kjus.

A delighted Alphand said afterwards: "I knew Aamodt would fight right till the end and he deserves credit for that. I never aimed to go down in history as a great skier but now I have and I'm very happy."

Aamodt was magnificent in defeat and said:

"Luc is a great champion. He won a lot of races this winter and I only won one — he deserves his success."

Alphand had to watch Aamodt complete an excellent second run to take over temporarily at the top of the standings after being just 16th following the first leg.

But Alphand, who had already won the downhill and Super-G World Cup titles, now becomes the first real specialist of the speed events to win the overall trophy — Schranz, although mainly a downhill, was also proficient in the giant slalom too.

Alphand's specialist exploits can be compared to those of Alberto Tomba, who won the title in 1995 while only skiing his specialities — the slalom and giant slalom.

Alphand had a poor time in Vail this week, coming ninth in both the downhill and Super-G, then saw Aamodt make up ground in Saturday's giant slalom for a deficit of just 70 points before Sunday's slalom swansong to the season.

Alphand had an eventful season, even claiming a Norwegian official had laid out the flags at a Super-G in Garmisch-Partenkirchen in late February to give an advantage to Norwegian skiers.

But he won that race to go back on top of the overall standings, ahead of Aamodt, and he never relinquished his lead.

He had achieved a real dream as earlier in the season, he said winning the overall World Cup title was more important to him than a world championship gold — he failed to win an event at the world championships in Italy earlier this year.

After receiving his trophy on Sunday, the 31-year-old Alphand flew off to Quebec for two days of snowbiking to unwind physically and mentally.

And, though Alphand will be going to the winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan, early next year, he was uncertain about his future. "I still love training and taking part, but how can I get any better?" he said.

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#### WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

- Q. 1 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:  
AKQ875 773 085 AQJ182  
The bidding has proceeded:  
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST  
10 19 30  
2NT Pass 1a Pass  
What action do you take?  
Q. 2 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:  
AK88 CA182 CQJ7 AA854  
Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?  
Q. 3 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:  
AS553 C82 D105 AAQ854  
The bidding has proceeded:  
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST  
10 19 30  
2NT Pass 1a Pass  
What action do you take?  
Q. 4 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:  
AKQ875 773 085 AQJ182  
The bidding has proceeded:  
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST  
10 19 30  
2NT Pass 1a Pass  
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## Nets knock off Knicks, Heat beat Houston

NEW YORK (R) — So does this mean the New Jersey Nets are the best team in the NBA?

The Nets, led by Sam Cassell's 23 points and career-high 10 rebounds, coasted to an 89-74 win over the New York Knicks Sunday, two days after knocking off the league-leading Bulls and a week after New York's win over Chicago was hailed as a matchup of the teams with the two best records in the NBA.

New Jersey (20-44) had a 31-7 run spanning the first two quarters and led 49-33 at halftime, yielding their fewest points in a half this season.

"These are the new New Jersey Nets," said Cassell, one of five players acquired in a flurry of trades last month. "We got some talent on this team."

"This says a lot about this team's mentality," said New Jersey coach John Calipari. "That was a nice win."

"We were never in it," said New York point guard Chris Childs, a former Net. Kendall Gill scored 17 points and ex-Knicks Xavier McDaniel added 14 points.

McDaniel added 14 points and a season-high 14 rebounds for New Jersey, which had a 19-5 offensive rebounding edge in the first half. The NBA record for offensive boards in a half is 23.

McDaniel, who lost both contact lenses and got a bloody nose in the game, led the Nets to a 61-35 rebound advantage.

Larry Johnson scored 21 points and Charles Oakley grabbed a game-high 14 boards for the Knicks. New York, which had won eight straight at home, set a season-low with 74 points in their arena.

Centre Patrick Ewing, last week's NBA player of the week, scored 11 points for the Knicks following a 12-point game in a loss to the Mavericks last Tuesday. "They outworked us," said Ewing. "They outplayed us. That's why they beat us."

The Knicks dropped a game behind the first-place heat in the Atlantic Division because in Miami, Tim Hardaway scored 31 points in a 101-80 victory over the Houston Rockets.

Isaac Austin had 18 points and nine rebounds and Voshon Lenard also scored 18 for Miami. The Heat, still without injured centre Alonzo Mourning, out-rebounded Houston 52-34.

The loss was the second in a row for Houston following a six-game winning streak. Hakeem Olajuwon led the Rockets with 20 points. Clyde Drexler played for Houston after missing over five weeks with a strained left hamstring. In 31 minutes he had 12 points on 5-of-13 shooting. But Charles Barkley missed his seventh straight game with a lacerated left



Orlando Magic guard Brian Shaw (L) knocks the ball away from Vancouver's Grizzlies Lee Mayberry during NBA action (Reuters photo)

hip.

At Detroit, Terry Mills scored 25 points and Joe Dumars added 21 points and seven assists to lead the Pistons to an 86-83 victory over the Seattle SuperSonics.

Grant Hill chipped in 11 points, 11 rebounds and five assists for Detroit, which had alternated wins and losses in its last seven games.

Hersey Hawkins tallied 18 points and Gary Payton had 16 for Seattle, which had a three-game winning streak halted.

In Inglewood, Eddie Jones scored 27 points and Elden Campbell added 24 as the Los Angeles Lakers topped the Toronto Raptors 98-90 in overtime for their third win in four games.

The Lakers, who outscored Toronto 11-3 in the extra session, have won four of their last six and improved to 9-9 since losing star centre Shaquille O'Neal to a knee injury.

Damon Stoudamire scored 22 of his 25 points in the first half and Marcus Camby collected 20 points and 11 rebounds for the Raptors.

In Milwaukee, Glenn Robinson scored 11 of his 30 points in the final 5:10 and the Bucks outlasted the Indiana Pacers 102-98.

The Bucks won for the second time in 12 games and handed Indiana its fifth

loss in six contests.

In Sacramento, Shawn Bradley hit a nine-foot jumper with 4.5 seconds left and he and Rick Strickland each scored eight points in the fourth quarter as the Dallas Mavericks defeated the Kings 89-88.

Strickland finished with 21 points, Bradley added 17 points and 11 rebounds and Derek Harper had 17 points and 10 assists for Dallas, which blew a 15-point third quarter lead before recovering in the fourth.

Mitch Richmond had 26 points for the Kings, who lost their fifth straight.

In Los Angeles, Clifford Robinson scored 26 points and Stacey Augmon added 13 as the Portland Trail Blazers won their ninth straight game, 106-94 over the Clippers.

Portland is on its longest winning streak since capturing a record 16 straight at the end of the 1990-91 campaign.

At Minnesota, Kevin Garnett had 26 points and seven rebounds and James Robinson led a season high with 25 points and five assists as the Timberwolves beat the woeful Boston Celtics 119-101.

In Orlando, Gerald Wilkins scored 17 points against his former team as the Magic handed the reeling Vancouver Grizzlies their 13th straight loss, 100-89.

### NBA RESULTS

Miami	101	Houston	80
New Jersey	89	New York	74
Milwaukee	102	Indiana	98
Orlando	100	Vancouver	89
Minnesota	119	Boston	101
Detroit	86	Seattle	83
Portland	106	LA Clippers	94
Dallas	89	Sacramento	88
LA Lakers	98	Toronto	90 (OT)

## Chang wins Champions Cup

INDIAN WELLS, California (R) — Third seed Michael Chang successfully defended his Champions Cup title and ended the best week of his life with a 4-6 6-3 6-4 6-3 victory over the unseeded Czech Sunday.

It was the third-ranked Chang's third career win at Indian Wells and his 28th career title.

"I think it's great just to be able to survive," Chang said of his win. "I feel very comfortable here. I can do a bit of fishing, relax, come out here and play good tennis."

In the midst of an impressive start to 1997, Chang has a 17-2 match record this year, a 10-match winning streak and two titles. His other tournament victory of the year was at Memphis in February.

Chang kept the tournament in American hands for the seventh straight year. Swede Stefan Edberg was the last foreigner to hoist the trophy, in 1990.

It was a first-time meeting between Chang and the 43rd-ranked Ulihrach, who will move into the top 30 in the rankings Monday.

## Daoudieh pledges Jordan's support for Pan-Arab Games

Lebanese officials stress 'Games open to all Arabs'

By Mohammad Ghannam in Beirut and Aileen Bannayan in Amman

JORDAN'S MINISTER of Youth Mohammad Daoudieh Monday pledged the Kingdom's full support for Lebanon's efforts to host the 8th Pan-Arab Games July 12-27.

He noted that Jordan was adamant that its delegation would actively take part in the Games — the largest gathering of Arab youth since the event was last held in 1992.

Jordan will be competing in 17 of the 20 events at the Games and the Jordan Olympic Committee has already sent the organisers a preliminary list of the 257-member delegation including 130 men and 37 women athletes, 64 officials and coaches, and 26 referees.

Mr. Daoudieh was addressing a press conference at the start of a four-day inspection visit by a special ministerial committee formed by the Arab Ministers of Sports and Youth (AMSU) in their recent meeting in Cairo.

In addition to Mr. Daoudieh, the committee includes Lebanese Minister of Sports Jean Obeid, AMSU executive officer and Egyptian Minister of Youth Abdul Mun'em Amara, Syrian Sports Minister Samih Mudallal, Secretary General of the Arab Sports Federation Othman Sa'ad, AMSU representative Abdul Hamid Wakil and Zeid Khyami, the secretary-general of the Lebanese Ministry of Sports.

Referring to Lebanon's preparations for the Games, Mr. Daoudieh stressed

that the committee was encouraged by the well-organised efforts of the Lebanese officials and voiced hope that all facilities would be ready on time.

Mr. Daoudieh said Jordan "was very enthusiastic about participation in the Games since they are not only a sporting event but a great chance for demonstrating Arab solidarity."

"We have great hope that the Games will be a success, both in the sporting sense and the fact that it will bring together Arab youth," he added.

"We are not here only to evaluate Lebanon's facilities and preparations for the Games but to contribute our support for Lebanon and its youth in their efforts of reconstruction."

Lebanese Minister Jean Obeid said the gathering of Arab sports ministers was a manifestation of their support for Lebanon's efforts, noting that his country was exerting all efforts to best prepare for the important event.

Asked about the possibility of Iraq's participation, Mr. Obeid said Lebanon invited all Arab countries. "The Games are open to all Arabs. We welcome them all, without exception," he added.

Mr. Obeid asked Arab countries to fulfil their promise of contributing financial support for the Games which had been due to be held last year but were postponed after the Israeli bombardment of southern Lebanon.

Meanwhile, the secretary-general of the Lebanese Ministry of Sports Zeid Khyami said the tight budget restrained the organisers from

exempting any country of participation fees unless the Lebanese Council of Ministers takes a decision to do otherwise.

AMSU executive officer and Egyptian Minister of Youth Abdul Mun'em Amara noted that the Council of Arab Ministers had stressed that Lebanon host the Games as part of their efforts to enhance the brotherly relations between Arab countries and lend support for Lebanon's efforts of reconstruction.

He added that Lebanon was also considered an ideal host for the Mediterranean Games.

Jordan's preliminary entry form includes participating in athletics, basketball, karate, fencing, swimming, taekwondo, table tennis, boxing, cycling, equestrian, soccer, weightlifting, judo, freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling, shooting and volleyball.

Other events at the Games include golf, yachting and tennis.

An evaluation team from the Jordan Olympic Committee has started meeting participating sports federations to finalise the Kingdom's delegation.

Jordan finished 9th in the last Pan-Arab Games with 1 gold, 6 silver and 6 bronze medals.

Hosts Syria topped the medals table with 48 points, 31 silver, 37 bronze followed by Egypt and Algeria.

The Arab Games were held in Alexandria '53, Beirut '57, Casablanca '61, Cairo '65, Damascus '76, Morocco '85, Damascus '92.

## Parma keep up pursuit of Juventus; Atletico Madrid crash 4-1

PARIS (AFP) — Italian League leaders Juventus trounced as Roma 3-0, but still failed to shake off championship challengers Parma, who beat rivals Inter Milan 1-0.

In Spain, Betis and Barcelona both kept up the pressure on leaders Real Madrid, and in Germany champions Dortmund suffered a surprise 4-1 defeat against Stuttgart.

PSG's own title hopes suffered a huge blow as they lost 1-0 to lowly Le Havre leaving them with seven points to make up on Monaco in France.

AC Milan meanwhile got back to their winning ways with a 2-0 victory over Fiorentina in another effort to force a match brought forward because of European Cup quarter-finals next week.

Juventus ended the day five points clear of Parma, who in turn had five points over Roy Hodgson's Inter — making the top two Italy's favourites for next season's enlarged European Champions League.

And Sunday, Sampdoria beat Reggina 3-0 to secure third spot.

Christian Vieri scored the first two goals for Juventus, rattling in a low shot from Nicola Amoruso's pass in the 28th minute and then sending an angled lob over

Roma goalkeeper Giovanni Cervone in the 44th.

Amoruso fired home the third in the 85th minute as Juventus made light of the absence of star strikers Alessandro Del Piero and Craoluan ace Alen Boksic, along with defender Gianluca Pessotto.

Parma had Italian international midfielder Dino Baggio sent off in the closing minutes, but Enrico Chiesa's 22nd minute strike from deep inside the area was enough to see them home — with the help

though of some superb goalkeeping by 19-year-old revelation Pierluigi Buffon.

Betis and Barcelona both kept up the pressure on Real Madrid with away victories at Rayo Vallecano and Logrones respectively in Spain this weekend.

Barcelona, who scored an incredible 5-4 victory over Atletico Madrid on Wednesday in the Spanish Cup quarter-final tie with a Ronaldo hat-trick, this time won 1-0 through Nigerian striker Emmanuel Smanike.

The Catalonians had a much tougher time than in their 8-0 thrashing of the lowly club in the first fixture at the Nou Camp Stadium.

An Alfonso Perez hat-trick

for Betis meant he moved up to second place in the goalscoring list with 21 behind Ronaldo who has 22.

Barcelona are in second spot level on points with Betis, but six behind leaders Real Madrid, who next face Real Sociedad.

Deportivo La Coruna, in fourth place, won their fifth match in a row to remain unbeaten since Carlos Alberto Silva took over from Welsh coach John Toshack, with their 1-0 win at Espanyol through

Morocco's Nouredine Naybet.

Last year's League and Cup double winners Atletico Madrid, still smarting from their 5-4 loss to Barcelona in midweek, this time were humiliated 4-1 at home to Valencia.

Atletico fell to the skill of Valencia's recent Argentinian signing Ariel Ortega, who scored the first goal and was involved in two others.

Bordeaux kept on the fringes of the French title hunt, beating Caen 3-1 at home to move within three points of second-placed Paris Saint Germain.

Bordeaux jumped two places into fourth spot as they came through with

goals from veteran Jean-Pierre Papin, Johan Micoud and Didier Tholot, but remain ten points behind runaway leaders Monaco.

The title favourites steam-rolled Rennes 3-0 away in their game Thursday with two goals from Sylvain Legwinski and one from Scottish international John Collins.

PSG's own title hopes suffered a huge blow as they lost 1-0 to lowly Le Havre leaving them with seven points to make up on Monaco.

Bastia, now level on points with Bordeaux, lost some ground as they were held 2-2 at home by Montpellier.

Goals came thick and fast in the Bundesliga matches as champions Borussia Dortmund crashed to a surprise 4-1 defeat at Stuttgart, while Bayern Munich blasted Schalke 3-0.

The results left Dortmund

and Bayern neck and neck at the head of the table with 46 points from 23 games, two points ahead of both Stuttgart and Bayer Leverkusen, who beat Arminia-Bielefeld 1-0.

Dortmund caved in, despite making the perfect start when Stefan Reuter shot home on eight minutes after taking a headed pass from Lars Ricken.

Just before half-time, Stungari's Bulgarian midfielder Krasimir Balakov converted a 44th minute penalty and, within seconds, the hosts' Dutch libero Frank Verlaan scored to make it 2-1.

Brazilian Giovane Elber and Zvonimir Soldo completed the rout with goals in the final seven minutes as Stuttgart, the league's top scorers with 55, carried on where they left off from crushing Cologne 5-1 on Wednesday.

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## Netanyahu should quit if he is unable to handle coalition, Mubarak asserts

CAIRO (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu should resign if he is unable to get right-wing members of his coalition to agree to accords reached with the Palestinians, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said.

The Egyptian news agency MENA on Monday quoted the Egyptian president as saying in an interview with the U.S. television station Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) that if he was in Mr. Netanyahu's position, he would have resigned.

"If I were in his place and there were problems with the right-wing ... about implementing what was agreed upon by the former government and ratified by the Knesset, I would tell them I'm resigning," Mr. Mubarak said.

"Peace is going to be reached whether Netanyahu likes it or not. Because this is ... what the people want," Mr. Mubarak said, adding that he expected the Israeli prime minister to be upset over his suggestion that he should resign.

Mr. Netanyahu has been facing strong opposition from members of his ruling coalition to peace agreements reached with the Palestinians since the Jan. 15 accord to withdraw Israeli troops from most of the West Bank city of Hebron.

Asked whether he felt sympathy for Mr. Netanyahu's troubles with his coalition, Mr. Mubarak said: "Peace is much more, very important than what is going on in the coalition."

"It is not only King Hussein who is very upset. I think if you ask ... you could ask so many leaders in the area and they feel that they are disappointed" by Israel's settlement policies in Jerusalem.

"Whenever you come and do anything in Jerusalem, as it is happening now, it's creating havoc. Jerusalem is a very sensitive issue and I underline this," Mr. Mubarak said.

Mr. Mubarak said it would be a "disaster" for the peace process if Palestinian President Yasser Arafat were to leave Gaza.

"Arafat has great credibility among his people. To find another party which takes this credibility is very, very difficult for the time being," Mr. Mubarak said.

In an interview with Egyptian state television, Mr. Mubarak cautioned Israel against "too much self-confidence" and warned that its determination to go ahead with its settlement policies will have "very serious repercussions."

"I insist on the word serious because what is happening could affect all of us," Mr. Mubarak told Egyptian television.

## Israeli probe prosecutor is threatened with death

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's state prosecutor has received death threats for ordering a probe into alleged high-level government corruption surrounding the aborted appointment early this year of an attorney general, officials said on Monday.

Judicial officials said Eina Arbel had received several telephone threats from anonymous callers over the investigation, which targets senior figures in the government and party of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"They threatened to kill Arbel if she pursued the investigation. Police have stepped up security around her," one official said.

The investigation focuses on allegations of conspiracy, fraud and breach of trust surrounding the January appointment of Roni Bar-On, a senior member of Mr. Netanyahu's Likud Party, as attorney general.

Mr. Bar-On was named over the objections of several ministers and legal experts allegedly because of pressure from Arbel Deri, who heads the powerful religious party Shas and is on trial for fraud and bribery.

According to the allegations, first reported by public television, Mr. Bar-On had promised Mr. Deri a plea bargain in his bribery trial if appointed. Deri allegedly threatened to withdraw his party's support from Mr. Netanyahu's government unless Mr. Bar-On was named.

Mr. Bar-On resigned as attorney general two days after taking office. Mr. Netanyahu and several ministers have been questioned by police in the investigation, which press reports on Monday said could conclude this week.

Ms. Arbel must then submit her recommendations on possible indictments to attorney general Elyakim Rubinstein for a final decision.

Press reports said it appeared unlikely that Netanyahu would be personally implicated in criminal wrongdoing, but indictments could be served against some of his close aides — chief of staff Avigdor Lieberman and Justice Minister Tzahi Hanegbi, in addition to Mr. Deri.

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PROTEST TENT: Top Palestinian official for Jerusalem Faisal Hussein on Monday speaks on his mobile telephone outside a Palestinian protest tent set up near Beit Sahour, south of where Israeli soldiers have taken position around Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem ahead of starting to build a Jewish settlement there (see page 1) (AFP photo)

## Assad stresses desire for peace, says Netanyahu is killing peace process

DAMASCUS (R) — President Hafez Al Assad on Sunday reiterated that Syria wanted to make peace with Israel but accused the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of seeking to kill the peace process.

Speaking at a dinner in Damascus in honour of visiting Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi, Mr. Assad welcomed efforts that Italy intends to exert to revive the Syrian-Israeli peace talks which broke off a year ago.

Mr. Assad said Mr. Netanyahu's refusal to exchange occupied Arab lands for peace — a formula on which the peace talks were based when they were launched in Madrid, Spain in 1991 — meant that he did not want peace.

"He who seeks to violate the Madrid term of reference is only seeking to kill peace in this region because this term enshrines the U.N. Security Council resolutions, the land-for-peace principle and their results," Mr. Assad said.

He said Mr. Netanyahu's government was placing obstacles in the way of peace by refusing to withdraw from the occupied Arab lands.

Syria has held sporadic peace talks with Israel since 1991 but the negotiations were blocked over the fate of the Golan Heights.

Syria said the previous Labour-led Israeli government agreed during talks with Damascus to withdraw fully from the Golan.

Mr. Netanyahu, who defeated Labour in an election last May, said he would not pull back from the Golan and that the talks should resume without conditions.

Mr. Assad welcomed efforts that Mr. Prodi was intending to exert to restart the Syrian-Israeli peace talks.

"We welcome you and your delegation to Syria as advocates of peace, pursuing the cause of peace. On our part, we stress that comprehensive, just and lasting peace is what we endeavour to achieve," Mr. Assad said.

"We welcome the role that Italy intends to play individually and with her partners in the European Union," he said.

In a reply, Mr. Prodi stressed the importance of the resumption of the Syrian-Israeli peace talks.

"Italy and the European Union are seeking to advance the peace process in the Middle East," the Italian premier said.

Mr. Prodi held a session of talks with Mr. Assad shortly after arriving in Damascus on Sunday evening.

Italian officials said Mr. Prodi, who is heading a 30-member economic delegation, would discuss how to boost the volume of trade between Syria and Italy.

They said that Syria's exports to Italy, which are mainly crude oil, totalled \$590 million in 1995 while Italy's exports to Syria during the same year stood at \$489 million. Final figures for 1996 were not available.

Officials said members of Mr. Prodi's team held separate talks in Damascus on Sunday with Syrian Economy and Foreign Trade Minister Mohammad Imadi on the possibility of signing an economic cooperation agreement between the two countries.

They said the talks also covered debts that Syria should pay to Italian companies, about \$25 million.

## Baghdad to get wheat in April

BAGHDAD (R) — More than 170,000 tonnes of wheat are due to arrive in Iraq in late March or early April, Iraqi and U.N. sources said on Monday.

They said the wheat, from Australia and France, was part of supplies Iraq purchased under an oil-for-food deal with the United Nations.

The deal allowing oil sales by Iraq worth \$2 billion in six months is designed to ease the impact of trade sanctions imposed on Iraq for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. In the 90 days to March 10 Iraq exported 52.3 million barrels of oil worth an estimated \$1.07 billion, including pipeline fees to Turkey.

Iraq will have access to about \$1.3 billion over six months after funnelling 30 per cent to a fund for Gulf war reparations and meeting other U.N. costs. More than \$800 million has been earmarked for food.

U.N. sources said most of the 151 international monitors to observe implementation of the deal were in place. They are to oversee the equitable distribution of supplies throughout the country.

Iraqi sources said they wanted to distribute food quickly.

Iraq's trade ministry said last week 13,000 tonnes of Thai rice were expected to arrive by March 26.

In the third week of March, Iraqi sources said, deliveries would begin from Turkey and Jordan.

From Turkey, they said, Iraq would receive 6,000 tonnes of white beans, 2,000 tonnes of chick peas and 10,000 tonnes of edible oil. Trucks from Jordan are expected to bring 3,000 tonnes of iodized cooking salt and thousands of tonnes of detergents.



Bet pays off

LONDON (R) — England clinched the triple crown with their 34-13 five nations victory over Wales, but it was one of their supporters, an anonymous woman, who scooped the big prize with a world record bet. The woman staked a total of £154,780 (\$247,000) in separate bets on England beating Scotland, Ireland and Wales. They were odds-on favourites to win each game but still came away with a profit of over £31,000. "It might seem foolhardy to risk £150,000 to win £30,000 but that represents a 20 per cent tax-free profit over the space of a few weeks — a rate that any financial institution would find hard to match," said Graham Sharpe, spokesman for the betting chain that took the bet. "I just hope she gives us the chance to win the money back."

Mobutu aides keep Sunday as day of rest

PARIS (R) — The fact that rebels have overrun their country's third largest city and appear closer than ever to toppling President Mobutu Sese Seko does not seem to alarm the president's aides — or disturb their rest habits. "Don't you know that it's Sunday," said an aide who answered the telephone at Mobutu's luxurious villa at Roquebrue-Cap Martin on the French Riviera. "We don't work on Sundays. If you journalists want to work on Sundays, we can't prevent you. But in Zaire we don't work on Sundays and we don't intend to work here. Call back tomorrow." Mobutu has spent most of his time in Europe since being operated on for prostate cancer in August. There was no indication if he was planning to return home now to rally his crumbling forces. The Zairean embassy in Paris did not answer its telephones.

Russian doctors market 'medicinal' vodka

MOSCOW (R) — Russian doctors in the southern city of Krasnodar have answered their countrymen's prayers and invented a vodka that they say is truly good for health. "Made with water containing silver ions and passed through a magnetic field, it possesses antibiotic properties and a curative effect," ITAR-TASS news agency quoted the doctors saying of "Silver Spring" vodka, which went on sale on Sunday. Millions of Russians swear by the medicinal effects of their national drink. But doctors blame heavy vodka drinking for a male life expectancy of just 58, far below the level in other industrialised countries.

African millionaire spreads wealth in Miami

MIAMI (R) — West African millionaire Babani Sissoko may have been convicted of bribing a U.S. customs agent, but that has not stopped him from spreading his wealth around in Miami. Sissoko, who pleaded guilty to paying a \$30,000 bribe to a customs agent in a bid to ship two military helicopters to Cambodia and was scheduled to report in April to do his prison time, has been spending money like there's no tomorrow, the Miami Herald reported. Sissoko's three lawyers, all of whom were given \$60,000 Mercedes cars last week, say he hands large bills to the homeless and others as he travels through the city each day. He gave \$300,000 to the Miami central high school marching band so it could travel to New York to play in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade.

## Rafsanjani renamed as head of supreme legislative body

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who is entering the final stretch of his term in office, was reappointed on Monday to head the country's highest legislative body.

Iran's paramount leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei named Mr. Rafsanjani to head the expediency council for the next five years, state radio said.

The council, created in 1988, is charged with resolving conflicts between parliament and the Council of the Guardians, a revolutionary body which seeks to ensure that the assembly's rulings conform to the constitution and Islamic teachings.

The expediency council can also convene at Ayatollah Khamenei's orders to decide on urgent political and economic matters.

Mr. Rafsanjani's political future was in question because he is not allowed to run in the May 23 presidential election, having served the maximum two four-year terms permitted under the constitution.

As in parliament, Islamic conservatives make up the majority of the 32-member expediency council, but persons of other political tendencies are also present.

Several members of the regime's revolutionary hard core were also appointed, including the leader of the Islamic Propagation Organisation, Ayatollah Ahmad Janati, and Mohammad Mohammadi Reysahri, a former intelligence minister and head of Iran's pilgrimage affairs.

## Qadhafi calls for marches for unity

CAIRO (AP) — Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi has called on his people to march to neighbouring Arab countries to pressure their governments into unifying with Libya.

Libya's official JANA news agency reported late Sunday that Colonel Qadhafi announced that "from this year, pressure for unity, marches for unity and disregard for artificial borders will begin."

Col. Qadhafi made the remarks at a gathering in the southern city of Sabha to mark the 20th anniversary of the announcement of "people's rule" in Libya. JANA said.

People's rule is a system designed by Col. Qadhafi that involves numerous citizen committees and councils, although the real power in the country remains with Col. Qadhafi.

Col. Qadhafi has always pushed for a brand of pan-Arabism that involves full integration of Arab states.

His latest call is reminiscent of the 1970s when Col. Qadhafi was pressing Arab rulers for mergers.

In 1971, Egypt, Libya and Syria united to become the federation of Arab republics. Libya's unity efforts then included a 30,000-person march to Cairo. But the federation quickly fell apart.

Another failed unity project was the 1977 steadfastness and confrontation front formed with Syria, Algeria, Yemen and the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

The Libyan news agency said Col. Qadhafi made the speech Saturday night. The agency often carries his remarks a day later.

## Red Army suspects threaten suicide if extradited to Japan

BEIRUT (Agencies) — Five suspected members of the Japanese Red Army arrested in Lebanon will commit suicide if the Lebanese authorities agree to extradite them to Japan, one of the suspects was quoted as saying Monday.

"If the Lebanese government takes such a decision we will kill ourselves in our cells to protect our comrades," Masao Adachi told a Lebanese newspaper, Al Kifah Al Arabi, in an interview published Monday.

Adachi, 57, and three other suspected members of the Japanese Red Army, Kazuo Tohira, 44, Haru Wako, 48 and Kozo Okamoto, 49, were interviewed at the Rumieh central prison on the outskirts of Beirut, the newspaper said.

The other suspect and only woman, Mariko Yamamoto, was not present. She is being held elsewhere in Beirut.

The five were indicted by a Lebanese court on March 8 for possession of false documents but no charges related to "terrorist" activities have been laid against them.

They have been charged with illegal residency and falsifying documents, charges that carry between three and seven years in prison.

But the Lebanese authorities have not charged them with any offences relating to their membership in the Japanese Red Army, which carried out a string of deadly attacks in the 1970s.

Adachi said the five had acknowledged using false passports but said: "We had no other choice because we could not get Japanese passports."

He said they had lived "for a long time" in the Beirut apartment where they were arrested on Feb. 15.

## S. African firm says no arms deal with Syria

ABU DHABI (AFP) — A South African arms manufacturer at the centre of controversial plans to sell tank firing systems to Syria said on Monday that no deal has been reached.

"They (Syrians) came to us last November and asked for a demonstration of our tiger fire control system. We demonstrated the system and they left without making clear if they want to buy or not," said Johan Alberts, managing director of South Africa's state-owned Denel.

"I do not know where those reports about plans to sell such systems to Syria came from. But the whole affair is a storm in a teacup," he told AFP at an international arms show in Abu Dhabi.

Israel voiced concern two months ago about reports that South Africa planned to sell Syria hundreds of millions of dollars of firing control systems for Syria's Russian-made T-72 tanks.

It said such a deal could jeopardise the Middle East peace process by upsetting the balance of regional forces, and the United States, Israel's main ally, has also criticised the plans.

But South African President Nelson Mandela insisted that his country was free to decide on arms exports and would not bow to outside pressure.

South African Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad said last month that Syria would take at least two and a half years before deciding and had also received offers from eight other competitors, including French, Spanish and U.S. firms.

Mr. Alberts said Denel, South Africa's biggest arms manufacturer, agreed to demonstrate the systems to the Syrians after getting permission from Pretoria.

"We have not signed anything and no one asked me about this issue," Mr. Alberts said.

Mr. Alberts said the South African government imposed tight controls on arms exports and bans sales of weapons to Iran, Iraq and Libya.

"This is a good thing. You should have a sort of control over arms exports because they could upset the military balances in certain areas. We are not politicians, so we need the government to supervise and control this sensitive business," he said.

Mr. Alberts said Denel had sold around \$400 million worth of defence equipment to the Middle East over the past four years and expects sales of between \$400 and \$600 million in the next two to three years.

"There are negotiations with some countries in the Middle East, including the Gulf for the supply of artillery and other weapons. We want to expand our share of this market," he said.

Denel has sold self-propelled Howitzers to Oman and the United Arab Emirates. The G-6 gun has a range of around 52 kilometres and is one of the most advanced artillery pieces in the world.

Mr. Alberts declined to say how many G-6 guns had been sold in the two Gulf states but industry sources estimated that Oman and the UAE had each bought 30.

Arms exports by Pretoria-based Denel have increased steadily from \$100 million in 1992-93 to \$225 million in 1995-96, he said.

South Africa is one of the largest participants in the UAE's defence exhibition, which has attracted more than 730 companies from 53 countries.